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THE WORKS

Eckhart, Meister

OF

MEISTER ECKHART

DOCTOR ECSTATICUS

by Franz Pfeiffer

VOLUME II

CONTAINING, BESIDES THE 'LOST' BOOK OF BENEDICTUS AND PFEIFFER'S TRACTATE XVII, A NUMBER OF SERMONS FROM THE OXFORD CODEX ENTITLED 'THE PARADISE OF THE RATIONAL SOUL' AND OTHER SOURCES. ALSO SOME HITHERTO UNRECOGNISED WORKS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED MS. DATED 1440 FORMERLY IN THE POSSESSION OF THE LATE PROFESSOR CARL SCHMIDT

TRANSLATION

BY

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LONDON

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS second volume of Meister Eckhart's *Works*, in English, is not confined, like the first,[1] to material collected by Pfeiffer, although it contains two important tractates and some sermons from his *Deutsche Mystiker*, vol. ii, as well as some passages from vol. i of that work, and a number of pieces belonging to the same school of thought contributed by him to Haupt's *Zeitschrift* in 1850,[2] while he was still collecting for his *Meister Eckhart*, and presumably as potential material for it. The rest of the volume is made up of (1) Sievers' Oxford collection from the MS. called *The Paradise of the Rational Soul*, which he published, together with six sermons from a Cassel MS. in the *Zeitschrift* of 1872 ;[3] and (2) some works from an unpublished MS. dated 1440, formerly in the possession of Prof. Carl Schmidt of Stuttgart, the man who about the middle of last century rescued Meister Eckhart from 500 years of oblivion.[4]

Taking these sources in their order, Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart* provides the two tractates, there numbered v and xvii, which form the first two parts of the present volume. They are admittedly authentic works which were omitted from the first volume of these translations partly on account of their length and partly with a view to consulting the recently published work of Strauch, Diederichs,[5] and others.

[1] The first volume, *Meister Eckhart* (Watkins, London, 1924) is a translation of Pfeiffer's *Deutsche Mystiker*, vol. ii, *Meister Eckhart*, Leipzig, 1857, by far the largest collection there is of Eckhart's German works.

[2] See 'Predigten und Sprüche der deutschen Mystiker,' a paper by Pfeiffer in the *Zeits. f. d. Alt.*, viii (2). Berlin, 1850.

[3] *Ibid.*, xv, 1872. 'Predigten von Meister Eckhart,' E. Sievers.

[4] See Schmidt's paper in *Mémoires de l'académie française*, etc. Paris, 1847.

[5] *Kleine Texte*, No. 55 and No. 117 (see Bibliography).

Pfeiffer's so-called Tractate XVII, *Die rede der underscheidunge, etc.*, which forms Part I of the present volume, is really a series of collations, *i.e.* talks or teachings: instruction given, as the fashion then was in religious houses, during meal-times, in this case to women, probably the inmates of a Beguine House. This work shares with Tractate V, *The Book of Godly Comfort*, the distinction of being the most important original work of Meister Eckhart, written probably with his own hand.[1]

The Book of Godly Comfort has only one source, the well-known codex, now B. ix, 15,[2] in the Basle University library. According to Büttner it appears in this codex associated with the discourse on *The Nobleman*[3] as the two parts of the 'lost' *Book of Benedictus*, a title taken, apparently, from the words *Benedictus deus* with which the tractate opens. We learn from Eckhart's *Vindication*[4] of 1326 that he wrote the book in German and sent it to Queen Agnes[5] of Hungary, probably on the occasion of the murder of her father in 1308 or on the death of her mother Elsbeth in 1313. This *Vindication* has been used as a check on the unique Basle MS., for it contains a series of long passages objected to by the Inquisition, literally translated into Latin.

In contrast to these two comparatively long and admittedly authentic works, Pfeiffer communicated to Haupt's *Zeitschrift* in 1850 a small collection of miscellaneous writings of the Eckhart school of thought. They are numbered from i to ix, and among them are pieces attributed to Kraft von Royberg (No. vii),

[1] At least eight sources are known. Pfeiffer relies on MSS. at Frankfurt and Munich (see *Trans.*, vol. i, p. vii). Diederichs on others at Karlsruhe and Berlin (see *K.T.*, 117). In Ruisbroeck's *Werken*, Ghent, 1860, there is a Latin version from which Lasson has taken some of his emendations (see his *Meister Eckhart der Mystiker*, 1868, p. xv).

[2] Numbered 12 M in Pfeiffer's catalogue of MSS. See *Trans.*, vol. i, p. vi.

[3] Pfeiffer makes no mention of this. The translation given here is from Strauch's text. See *Kleine Texte*, 55.

[4] Eckhart's vindication of his teachings which were objected to by the Inquisition.

[5] Or her mother Elsbeth, as Büttner says, *ibid.*

Franke von Köln (No. viii), Heinrich von Egwint (No. v), and Johannes von Sterngassen (No. ix). Preger has shown[1] long ago that the chief sources of these writings[2] are suspect so far as the ascriptions are concerned. Relying on internal evidence —and as a rule there is no other—Nos. vii and viii[3] are now by common consent assigned to Meister Eckhart himself, and translations of Nos. v and ix are included in the present volume[4] on the grounds that both in matter and in manner they too may well be his work,[5] albeit in a more or less mutilated state. Johannes von Sterngassen and H. von Egwint[6] were two of Eckhart's closest followers, and it is often difficult to distinguish their writings from those of Eckhart himself, especially as, after Eckhart's death and excommunication they went on spreading his teaching, quoting him freely while perforce suppressing his name.

Lastly with regard to Pfeiffer's publications it will be remembered that in the preface to the first volume of these translations, Pfeiffer's *Deutsche Mystiker*, vol. i, was mentioned as a source of Eckhart's writings. Further examination has shown that there are a number of passages scattered

[1] See his *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, i, p. 318 *et seq.*

[2] *Einsiedeln* 278 (Pfeiffer's 7 G) and the Basle Codex B. xi, 10 (Pfeiffer's 2 B).

[3] See *Trans.*, vol. i, I, viii (Divine Understanding), and II, xvii (Two Ways).

[4] See Sermons XV–XXIII. These, if they are indeed not the work of Meister Eckhart himself, are a good example of the difficulty of distinguishing his writings from those of H. von Egwint and Johann (?) von Sterngassen, and here the difficulty is increased by abridgment which reduces some of the pieces to hardly more than a series of disjointed notes.

[5] Except that they are not abridged, these remarks apply equally to Sermons XXIV and XXV, Waekernagel's *Altdeutsche Predigten*, lxii and lxiii, which are found in the Basle Codex B. xi, 10, under the name of 'Der von Sterngassen.'

[6] Another case of wrong attribution has just come to light in Schmidt's MS. of 1440. Here two sermons (59 and 60) from the Basle Codex B. xi, 10, marked i and ii on *Maria über daz gebürg*, are assigned to Heinrich von Egwint. They are, however, markedly different in style, and examination shows that the whole of No. 60 is found in Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart*. See this volume, p. ix.

throughout the book which might well be quotations from his works, and two characteristic examples [1] are given from the Christmas Day Masses in Hermann von Fritslar's *Heiligenleben.*

Schmidt's MS. dated 1440.—In the Introduction to his *Meister Eckhart* (1857) Pfeiffer notes that a MS. containing forty sermons by Meister Eckhart, paper, dated 1440, in the possession of Prof. Karl Schmidt of Strassburg, has remained inaccessible to him. This MS. has now been unearthed by Dr E. M. Hummel of U.S.A., and it is to him that I am indebted for the photographic reproduction of it from which, in default of any published text, the following translations have been made.

The MS. appears, from an inscription on the inside of the cover, to have belonged originally to the Dominican Convent at Inzighofen near Sigmaringen, and after being in the possession of Prof. Schmidt it has now passed into that of the Landes- und Universitäts-Bibliothek at Strassburg, where it has lain almost wholly neglected until now.

The MS. consists of 334 folios and is bound in leather. The lettering on the back reads : *Mystische Predigten aus dem XIV Jahrhundert, MS. von* 1440. The library number is 2795. There are 78 sermons, etc., followed by a contemporary index. There is also another, modern, index, no doubt Schmidt's, headed by the words, ' Most of the sermons appear to be by Eckhart.' In this index 43 numbers are identified in Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart,* and 21 of these in the Basle Tauler 1521 [2] as well. Of the 43 numbers all but four [3] are labelled ' Eckhart,' and so is one other not in Pfeiffer and not recognised before as the work of Eckhart; this is No. 18, *Amor est*

[1] See III, x.

[2] Adam Petri's edition of Tauler's *Sermons,* Basle, 1521–22. (Pfeiffer's 20, *d.*)

[3] They are : Nos. 12 and 33, both variants of Pfeiffer, I, v ; No. 51 (see Pfeiffer, II, iv ; and I, lxxxvii) ; and No. 65 (see Pfeiffer, IV, 127–136, 138, 140, 141, 148 ; IV, 2).

fortis, which Büttner has recently published under Eckhart's name.[1]

Of the remaining 34 numbers five have now been identified with known writings of Eckhart's. Thus No. 14 is found to be a variant of Pfeiffer's *Mary and Martha* sermon, and No. 60 is made up of Pfeiffer's Tractate XII, (gloss), and two other passages[2] also in Pfeiffer. Again, Schmidt's No. 41 is the same as the sermon on *Five Kinds of Poverty*,[3] except that it stops short of the end, and his No. 3 is a variant of the well-known *Two Ways*, of which No. 50 also is a fragment.

Besides these already known works there are in Schmidt's MS. six anonymous pieces which may more or less confidently be assigned to Meister Eckhart, and in addition there is an excerpt from No. 50 which has not been met with in other variants of *The Two Ways*. Translations of all these and of No. 14 (Pfeiffer's I, ix) will be found in the present volume numbered as follows :—

Trans., vol. ii, III,	I=	Schmidt, No.	13,	f°	46ᵃ.
,, ,,	II=	,,	14,	f°	47ᵇ.
,, ,,	III=	,,	18,	f°	67ᵇ.
,, ,,	IV=	,,	20,	f°	73ᵃ.
,, ,,	V=	,,	34,	f°	144ᵇ.
,, ,,	VI=	,,	43,	f°	190ᵃ.
,, ,,	VII=	,,	50,	f°	207ᵇ (excerpt).
,, ,,	VIII=	,,	57,	f°	237ᵇ.
,, ,,	IX=	,,	77,	f°	328ᵃ.

Schmidt's No. 13 is perhaps a variant of Pfeiffer, I, v, *Deus charitas est*. There are, however, important differences which in view of the words, 'I said in my first sermon, God is love,' suggest that it is rather one of a course beginning with Pfeiffer, I, v.

No. 14, *Mary and Martha*, is not marked 'Eckhart' in Schmidt's index.

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[1] See his *Meister Eckharts Schriften und Predigten*, ii, 8. This version is from the Basle Tauler, 1521, f° 281ᵇ.

[2] p. 507, 16—508, 23 (Trans., i, p. 360, 26—361, 25), and IV, 3.

[3] Jostes No. 34 and Trans., i, I, xlvi.

No. 34 seems to be the sermon referred to at the end of Pfeiffer's I, xc : 'I once said that virgins follow the lamb,' etc. Pfeiffer's *Saying*, No. 57, comes out of this sermon, and it contains a number of other passages found also in Pfeiffer.[1]

No. 43 is obviously a fragment of some larger work.

No. 77. Here the use of the words *mens* and *sinderesis* as well as the quotations, which are for the most part favourites with Eckhart, point to his authorship. Also this sermon has a number of passages in common with Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart.*[2]

Sievers' Collection.[3]—The last part of this volume of translations consists of 26 sermons from two MSS., one at Oxford and one at Cassel.

1. The Oxford MS. O. is the Bodleian Library fourteenth-century parchment Codex *Laud. Misc.*, 479, entitled *The Paradise of the Rational Soul.*[4] It is a collection of 64 German sermons in two parts containing respectively 31 and 33 sermons, the authors of which are named in the short introductory sketch of the contents. The whole of it is written in the same hand. The MS. comes, like so many of the MSS. of Laud's library, from the Carthusian Monastery at Mainz.

Of the 31 sermons by Meister Eckhart in Part I Sievers publishes twenty hitherto unknown, and in addition to these there are eleven others, more or less widely differing versions of his already known works. A copy of all these did not seem warranted,[5] although the variations from the Pfeiffer texts are

[1] Sch. 145ᵃ, 7 = Pf. 333, 24 ; Sch. 145ᵃ, 18 = Pf. 298, 36 ;
„ 145ᵇ, 20 = „ 190, 14 ; „ 146ᵇ, 6 = „ 85, 24 ;
„ 147ᵃ, 17 = „ 329, 2 ; „ 147ᵇ, 21 = „ 397, 35.

[2] Sch. 328ᵃ, 14 = Pf. 651, 25 ; Sch. 329ᵇ, 23 = Pf. 383, 19 ;
„ 330ᵇ, 20 = „ 142, 15 ; „ 331ᵃ, 5 = „ 359, 26.
„ 329ᵃ, 16 = „ 383, 11.

[3] 'Predigten von Meister Eckhart,' by E. Sievers, see *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, Berlin, 1872, Bd. xv. The following account is taken from his appendix to the collection.

[4] 'dit buchelin heizit ein paradis der fornuftigen sele.'

[5] The entire MS. O. has now been published by P. Strauch, from Sievers' copy, under the title *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, see *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters*, Berlin, Band xxx, 1919.

as a rule not unimportant, some of the sermons appearing in a radically different form. The wide variations in the contents of the different recensions of these sermons are shown, *e.g.* by No. 2, the opening sentences of which coincide with Pfeiffer's No. 29, whereas the bulk of the sermon itself appears to be new. In particular cases it is impossible, says Sievers, with the critical apparatus at our disposal to decide which of the two recensions is to be preferred.

As regards the text of the MS. O. there is, generally speaking, little to be said for it. It is full rather of abstracts than of actual quotations, and presents only the most striking ideas, omitting the connecting links, as in No. VIII, where only the fringe of the subject is touched, indicating the scope of the whole.

The remaining 33 sermons of the MS. are distributed between twelve authors, of whom little is known. They are close followers of Eckhart, and most, if not all, seem to be his immediate disciples.

2. C., the paper MS. theol. 4to. 94 in the Königl. Landesbibliothek at Cassel, dated 1470, contains among other things ten sermons bearing no superscription or author's name. Sievers has no hesitation in attributing all these to Meister Eckhart, especially as the first, fourth, and sixth appear in Pfeiffer's collection numbered 75, 108, and 45; moreover, the third is the same as No. 1 of the Oxford MS. attributed to Eckhart. These six sermons given by Sievers gain, he says, special interest from the fact that they are evidently a part of the original of Pfeiffer's Tractate III, *On the Rank and Nature of the Soul*. The text of the MS. has, on the whole, suffered less than O. from abridgment, but on the other hand the sense is often destroyed by clerical errors. The superscriptions of the sermons i–xx are taken from the contents.

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[1] See also Bibliography in *Trans.*, vol. i.

[2] References to *Pfeiffer* mean to his *Meister Eckhart*, 1857; and *Trans.*, vol. i, stands for the English translation of it (1924).

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[1] This is Pfeiffer's Tractate XVII, *Das sint die rede der underscheidunge*, etc., whose long title has been shortened to the last two words of it.

[2] Sermons I–IX are translations from Schmidt's MS. dated 1440.

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[1] No. x is from Pfeiffer's *Deutsche Mystiker*, vol. i, p. 30, where it is attributed to H. von Fritslar.

[2] Nos. XI–XIV are from Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart*. See I, X, XLIII, LVIII and LXXXIX (excerpt).

[3] For Nos. XV–XVIII, see Pfeiffer's text published in Haupt's *Zeitschrift*, viii (2), 1850, under the name of Heinrich von Egwint. Nos. XIX–XXIII are also found here attributed to Johannes von Sterngassen.

[4] Nos. XXIV and XXV are Wackernagel's LXII and LXIII.

[5] For the rest of the sermons see Sievers' collection published in Haupt's *Zeitschrift* of 1850. Nos. XXVI–XLV are from the Oxford Codex (O.) and the remaining six from the Cassel MS. (C.).

I
IN COLLATIONIBUS

I[1]

THESE ARE THE DISCOURSES OF FRIAR ECKHART THE DOMINICAN, VICAR OF THÜRINGEN, PRIOR OF ERFURT, HELD WITH CERTAIN OF HIS PENITENTS, WHO ASKED MANY QUESTIONS IN THE COURSE OF CONVERSATION, AS THEY SAT TOGETHER 'IN COLLATIONIBUS.'

1. True obedience

True and perfect obedience is the virtue of virtues; without it no really great work can be done and no act however small, however trifling, but is done to better purpose if done in true obedience, be it the hearing or reading of the mass, or prayer or contemplation or anything else that thou canst think of. Take any act, as holy as you please, be it what it may obedience raises it, ennobles it for thee. Obedience always makes for what is best. Obedience never errs and never fails, no matter what we do, provided it is done in true obedience, for it never misses any good. Obedience durst not have a single care nor does it want for any blessing; where, in obedience, a man goes out of what is his, by that same act God must go in instead, for he who has no self-intent God tends just like himself. When, having surrendered my will (and put myself) in the hands of my prelate I cease to care for myself, then God must care for me, if he neglects me he is neglecting himself. Always, where I fail to choose for myself God chooses for me.

Well, what does he choose for me? To have no will of my

[1] See also Diederichs, *Kleine Texte*, 117. There are two modern German renderings, one by Büttner (*Meister Eckhart's Schriften und Predigten*, ii, No. 1) and the other a careful translation by Bernhart, as well as an English version by N. Leeson (see Bibliography).

own. Where I leave myself he needs must will for me all that he wills for himself, no more and no less, and in the same way as he does for himself. If he failed to do this then in truth, which is God, God would not be just, nor would he be God, for that is his essential nature. In genuine obedience there is never found, 'I will so and so, this thing or that,' but a total absence of *thine*, so the very best prayer a man can pray has no 'give me this virtue or that wont' or 'give me Lord thyself' or 'life eternal,' but 'give me nothing Lord but what thou wilt and do, O Lord, just what and as thou wilt.' This excels the first as the heavens do earth. Having prayed like this man has prayed well. He has entirely resigned himself to God (in) true obedience, and as in true obedience there is no positive 'I will,' so there is never heard from it, 'I will not': 'I will not' is the bane of true obedience. According to St Augustine, the faithful servant does not care to be told or given things he likes to hear and see; his first and highest care is waiting on God's good pleasure.

2. The most powerful prayer of all and the highest work of all

The most powerful prayer, one wellnigh omnipotent, and the worthiest work of all is the outcome of a quiet mind. The quieter it is the more powerful, the worthier, the deeper, the more telling and more perfect the prayer is. To the quiet mind all things are possible. What is a quiet mind? A quiet mind is one which nothing weighs on, nothing worries, which, free from ties and from all self-seeking, is wholly merged into the will of God and dead as to its own. Such an one can do no deed however small but it is clothed with something of God's power and authority. It behoves us to pray hard so that all our mortal members with their powers—eyes, ears, heart, mouth, and all their senses—are turned in that direction, and we must never stop until we find ourselves on the point of union with him we have in mind and are praying to, God namely.

3. Unresigned people, who are full of own-will

'Alas, Sir,' people say, 'I wish I stood as well with God, had as much devotion, were as much at peace with God as other people are. If only I could be like this, or as poor as that,' or, 'It is not a bit of good unless I can be here or there or do so and so. I must live away from home, in a convent or a cell.'—Believe me, the fault is in thyself and nowhere else. It is nothing but own will. Thou mayst not know it and it may not seem so to thee, but the only source of restlessness in thee is thy personal will, whether this is realized or not. We think we ought to flee this thing or follow that—places, people, methods, purposes, or acts—but ways and things are not to blame for hindering thee, it is thou thyself in things that is standing in thy way, cleaving to things as thou dost inordinately. Starting with thyself then, rise up and quit thyself. An thou flee not first thyself it is certain that wherever else thou mayest flee thou wilt find thou art disturbed and hindered, be it where it may. For people to seek peace in outward things—in places, persons, ways or works, in poverty or exile or despisery or anything else however important it may be—is all in vain, it will not bring peace. Those who seek in this way are looking in the wrong direction: the further out they go the less are they likely to find what they are seeking. They go like one who has missed his way: the further he walks the wider he strays. But what ought he to do? He must leave himself first; he will then have left all things. A man may give up a kingdom or the whole world but if he still clings to himself he has given up nothing. But supposing he gives up himself then no matter what he may keep, riches or honours or what not, he will have given up all things. Commenting on St Peter's words, 'See, Lord, we have left all,' when he had left merely his boat and net, a holy man (Hieronymus) observes: He who resigns the little of his own free will resigns not that alone: he is resigning all that worldly folk are out to gain, all they could possibly desire. But he who gives up his own will and himself

to boot is giving up all things as surely as though they were his very own, his absolutely. What thou wilt not desire thou hast resigned and left for love of God. Our Lord said, ' Blessed are the poor in spirit,' in desire, that is to say. Had there been a better way doubtless our Lord would have told us so just as he told us, ' If anyone will come after me he must deny himself first,' and there lies the crux of the whole matter. Watch thyself, and wherever thou findest thyself, there leave thyself : it is much the best way.

4. The practice of resignation: what to do inwardly and outwardly

Remember, in this life no one ever left himself so much but he could find something more to leave. Very few can stand it who know what it really means. It is just a give and take, a mutual exchange : thou goest out of things so much and just so much, no more or less, does God go in : with all of his if thou dost go clean out of all of thine. Try it, though it cost thy all. That way lies true peace and none elsewhere.

People ought not to mind much what they do, they ought to mind more what they are. If folks were good, their natures, their deeds would show it soon enough. If thou art righteous so too are thy works. Think not to vest holiness in doing, holiness depends on being. It is not the work which hallows us, it is for us to sanctify the work. Deeds may be never so holy and not hallow us one whit, so far as they are deeds, but so far as we *are*, have being (character), to that extent we hallow all we do—eating, sleeping, watching or anything else. With people of weak character whatever they do it comes to nothing. The moral of which is that all our efforts should be spent on *being* good, not caring so much what we do, the sort of work, as about the grounds of action.

5. Mark what makes character and motive good

The secret of fine character and also of good motive, the basis of the worth of human works, is the fixing of the mind on

God. Direct all thy studies to the end that God loom large in thee, and let thy industry and fervour be entirely for him in all thou doest and dost leave undone. The more this is the case with thee the better for thy work of whatever kind. Fasten on to God and he will fasten all his favours on to thee. Seek God and thou shalt find God and all good to boot. Verily, having this intention thy stepping on a stone would be a godlier act than the taking of the body of the Lord while preoccupied with thy own affairs, thy mind being less distracted. Who cleaves to God God cleaves to and all virtue. And what before thou used to seek is now seeking thee, and what before thou didst pursue is now pursuing thee, and what before thou wouldst escape is now escaping thee. He who sticks tightly to God to him sticks all that is godly, him all that is alien and unlike shall flee.

6. Solitude and God-getting

I was asked this question : Some people shun all company and like to be alone, their peace depends upon it, would they not be better in the bosom of the church ? I said, No, and you shall see why. The righteous man is righteous still in any place and any company and the unrighteous man is unrighteous still in every place and in all company. The righteous man has God in truth in him. But one who has God in very truth will have him in all places, in the streets and in the world no less than in the church, in the desert or the cell : if he has gotten him indeed and gotten him alone he is proof against all hindrance.—Why ?—Because having gotten God alone he is ever bearing God alone in mind : is big with God in all his acts as well as in all places, and all his works are being done by God, for the author of the work his really and truly is the work rather than his who is the agent of the work. So if we give our whole mind to God then it is he in fact who is doing all our works, and nothing whatever can disturb him, not company or place. Nor can anyone disturb this man who minds nothing, seeks nothing, relishes nothing but God ; for

he is united with this man, in all his thoughts, and as God is not disturbed by any multiplicity so nothing can disturb or diversify this man who is one in *the one* where all multiplicity is one and homogeneous.

Man ought to lay hold of God in everything, and he should train his mind to have God ever present in his thoughts, his intentions and affections. Watch thy attitude towards thy God. As thou art in church or cell that same frame of mind preserve and take it out into the world, into its turmoil and its fitfulness. And, as I often say, speaking of equability, it does not mean putting all actions on a par, nor all places nor all people, that would be quite wrong, for praying is a better act than spinning and church is a better place than street. What it does mean is being even-tempered in thy dealings, having unfaltering faith and bringing to thy God an unwavering devotion. Being in this sense equable, no one, I warrant, could come between thee and thy present God. But with anyone whom God is not really in like this, who must always go and fetch him from outside, from this or that, seeking him in changeful modes, in work perhaps or in place or people, here the man not having God is easily distracted, for he has neither gotten God nor is not seeking him alone nor does not want nor mind him only and therefore he is hindered not merely by bad company but also good; not merely by the streets but by the churches; not by foul words and deeds alone but by fair as well. The hindrance is in him because in him things have not all turned into God, for if they had all would be well and good with him in every place and in all company: he would have gotten God whom no one can take from him, nor is it possible to meddle with his work.

Wherein lies this true divine possession, this real God-getting? This real God-getting is a mental process, an inner turning of the mind and will towards God, not in one fixed and definite idea, it would be impossible for nature to hold it in the mind or at least extremely difficult, nor is it the best way. We ought not to have or let ourselves be satisfied with any

thought of God: when the thought goes our God goes with it. No, what we want is a real (subsistent) God who far transcends the thoughts of men and creatures. This God does not disappear unless we turn our back on him of our own accord. He who has God thus, in reality, has gotten God divinely, to him he is apparent in all things, everything smacks to him of God, everywhere God's image stares him in the face. God is gleaming in him all the time; in him there is riddance and return, the vision of his God ever present to his mind. Like a man athirst with a mighty thirst, he may be doing other things than drinking, and thinking other thoughts, but whatever he is at or whoever he is with or whatever sort of temper he is in, no matter what he is working at or thinking, as long as the thirst lasts there will never leave him the idea of drinking, and as his thirst increases, the stronger, more deep-seated, more present, more persistent will grow the notion of the draught. Or again, the ardent lover, wrapped up in some object and with no heart for other things, he cares for that alone, not a jot for aught beside. Well, wherever that man is and with whom he is, whatever he is doing or undertakes to do, the idea of his beloved never fades out of his mind, he finds it everywhere and as his love grows stronger it haunts him more and more. Even so this man will not be seeking rest, for no unrest disturbs him. He finds more favour in God's eyes if he takes everything to be divine, higher than the thing is in itself. I grant you this needs effort, application, careful cultivation of the interior life and good sound sense and understanding whereon to stay the mind in things and with people. This is not learnt by flight, by one who runs away from things, who turns his back upon the world and flees into the desert: he must learn to find the solitude within where or with whomsoever he may be. He must discover how to enter things and seizing God therein, get a clear impression firmly rooted in his mind, just as one learns to write. In order to acquire this art a man must practise hard and often however dull and troublesome it is and however much beyond him it may seem to be.

With industry and patience he will get the knack. True, at first he will have to pay attention to each letter and impress it firmly in his mind, but later on, when he has mastered it, he pays no attention to these hieroglyphics but writes freely, all untrammelled by them ; whether it be penmanship or conning to which he puts his art it is enough to know that he is going to use it. Though he pays but scant attention to his task and thinks of something else, still he goes on doing it in virtue of his cunning. And so this man in virtue of God's presence goes on shining without effort ; what is more, he is alive to one pure nature in all things while all unoccupied with the things themselves. This in its early stages is a matter of attention and forming definite impressions, as with the scholar and his art. Finally the mind of man pervaded with a sense of God and throughly informed with the form of God and accustomed to him is able to see him without trying.

7. Man's highest work is done mentally

We find many people at the stage—an easy one to reach if we have a mind to—at which the things they move among are not a hindrance and leave no lasting impression on the mind, for where the heart is full of God creatures can have no place, they can find no room. But not content with this we ought in our own interests to put things on a higher level, so that they are what we are, what we see or hear, however strange or disagreeable. Then not till then we have taken the right road, and there is no end to it, one is able to go forward without stopping, gaining ground and making genuine progress. And in everything he does and on all occasions a man ought always to be sensible of using his higher mind, always to have a subtile consciousness between his (personal) self and his higher nature and be alive to God in things as much as possible. We ought to be, as our Lord says, ' Like people on the watch, expecting the arrival of their lord.' Expectant people will of course be on the alert, looking out for him whom they are expecting and ready to espy him in all comers, the least likely,

if peradventure he is there. And so ought we to be on the look out for the presence of our Lord in everything. This will need hard work, and it will cost us our entire stock of passions and of powers if we are to do it properly and succeed in seeing God in everything alike, in finding God to the same extent in everything. One act must of course differ from another, but he who does his work with equanimity verily his deeds will all count equal and he will be just indeed. To him God shows as clearly in the very worldliest as in the very godliest, to him it would all be God. Not that the man himself should do anything worldly or untoward, but such things as chance to meet his outward ears and eyes let him transmute to God. One whom God is present to in everything like this, who has his mind well under his control and is using it, he and he only knows true peace and he has heaven indeed. But to be in the right state one of two things has to happen: either he must find God and learn to have him in his works, or else things and works must be abandoned altogether. But no one in this life can be without activities, human ones and not a few at that, so man has to learn to find his God in everything and not to be disturbed by places or by acts. So when the beginner has to do with other people let him strongly commit himself to God, and fixing him firmly in his heart, with him associate all his intentions, thoughts, desires, and powers, so that nothing else can come into his mind.

8. Unremitting effort in the highest progress

No work is ever so properly begun or so well done, no man is ever so free and so certain in his actions, that he can afford to let his mind relax or go to sleep; but he ought with his twin powers, intellect and will, to be for ever hoisting himself up and seizing, at the summit, his very best therein and guarding himself against evils of all kinds, subjective and objective, thus he never misses anything but is always making first-rate progress.

9. How sinful inclinations are always salutary

The impulse to wrong-doing, let me tell you, is not without its uses, and is very salutary to good people. There are two types of these. The one is not liable to faults, or none to speak of. The other is the victim of bad habits. By the outward presence of a thing his outward man is moved to anger, pride, or sensuality, according to the nature of the thing, while in his higher powers he stays all unmoved, and is no party to defect, not to bad temper or any other failing, but detests his fault, which is very likely an hereditary weakness, since many men by nature are proud, choleric, etc., without the least idea of committing sin. This (type of man) has the chance of acquiring far more merit, his reward is much bigger and much better, and his virtue more sterling than the first. For consummate virtue comes by striving, or, to quote St Paul, 'Virtue is perfected in weakness.'

Inclination to sin is not sin, but consenting to sin, to give way to anger (for instance), is sin. Surely no wise man, had he the power to choose, would elect to be rid of sinful inclination, for without it one would always be uncertain, doubtful what to do, and irresponsible, as well as being shorn of the honours of the fight and the rewards of victory. For by the shock and emotion of wrong-doing are brought forth in travail virtue and its fruits. Temptation makes a man work all the harder in the cause of right and drives him with a strong hand in the proper course; it is a cruel lash which whips him into cover behind virtue. The weaker a man finds himself the greater the need of getting up his strength and looking to his laurels; for virtue and vice too are a matter of the will.

10. How the will can do all things and how virtues all lie in the will, provided it is good

A man has little cause to be afraid of anything provided he knows himself to be well intentioned, nor ought it to worry him at all if he cannot translate it into fact. Withal he is

wrong to underrate his virtue so long as he is certain of his good intention, since virtue, and good generally speaking, is vested in good will. There can no fault be found with thee if thou hast right good will—not with thy love or lowliness or any virtue whatsoever. What with all thy heart thou vehemently wilt that same thou hast, and neither God nor creature can deprive thee of it, granting thy will is sound, a right godly will and present to God. Not, 'I would,' that is future, but, 'I will': that it may be so now. For instance, there is something a thousand miles away that I have set my heart on, then it is really mine, more so than the object in my lap which I care nothing for.

Good is no less powerful for good than evil is for evil. And mind you, though I never do a single evil deed, yet if I have the will to sin the sin is mine as though I had committed it, so that by fully meaning to I might be guilty of some monstrous crime, wholesale murder, for example, and never lift a finger. Why not the same with good intention? It is and incomparably more so. In this will I can do all things. I can bear all the sorrows of the world, feed all the hungry, do everybody's work, or anything you can conceive. Provided the failure is not one of will but of power only, thou hast done it all in the sight of God; not for an instant can this be disputed or denied. To mean to do as soon as possible and to have done are both the same to God. If I make up my mind to have all human knowledge, if that is my firm and full intention, then in truth I shall possess it, for what I have in mind is mine. And if I really mean to love as much as anyone has ever done, or to honour God as much, or anything you can conceive, then it is so in truth, given the saving will.

Thou dost ask, When is the will a saving will? The will is good and saving when it is impersonal, when dead to self, it has been formed, transformed, into the will of God. The more this is the case with thee the better and truer is thy will, and in this will all things are possible to thee, love or anything thou wilt.

The question is, how can I have this love while I have no

inkling of it, am not the least aware of it like many people, evidently deeply touched, in whom I find a passionate wonder and devotion of which I am quite innocent ?

Remember, in love we have to reckon with two things. One is love itselt, and the other the activity, the expression of the state of love. The seat of love is in the will and in the will alone. The more will a man has the more love he has too. But who has more of it nobody knows of anyone else : that lies hid in the soul, while God lies hid in the ground of the soul. This love lies wholly in the will : the stronger the will the deeper the love. Then there is the other thing, the outcome and effect of love, clearly apparent in the guise of spirituality, devotion, jubilation, and which, truth to tell, is not always of the highest, for not always does it come from love, sometimes it comes from nature, from the tasting of its sweets : it may be due to heavenly inspiration or to sensible affection, and the people most subject to such things are not always of the best, for granting it does come from God, he gives it to the likes of these to whet their curiosity and to act as a lure as well as a deterrent from the company of other men. These same people later on, if they wax in love, will very likely find there is a falling off in their feelings and experiences, withal their love is plainly shown by their keeping true to God without any inducements of the kind. Suppose, again, it is entirely love, it will not for all that be the highest of the kind, and jubilation of this sort may well be left at times for something better in the way of love, perhaps to do some needed act of kindness, ghostly, bodily, or worldly. As I have often said, if a man is in a rapture, like St Paul, and becomes aware of some sick person wanting of him just a sup of broth, it seems to me far better of thy charity to forgo thy rapture and serve the needy in a loftier love. No man need fear to be robbed of grace thereby. Things cheerfully resigned for love he gets back in a better way, according to Christ's promise, ' He who leaves anything for my sake shall receive again an hundredfold.' Aye, whatever a man leaves, denies himself, for God's

sake, e'en the passionate longing for his consolation, for the sense, the intuition of him which he does all he can to get and God does not choose to grant him: this, if he take heart of grace and blithely does without it in God's name, I warrant he shall find in him the same as though he had gotten every boon that ever was and full possession of it. Having cheerfully forsworn and gotten rid of things for God, he receives as much again an hundredfold. Things a man holds dear, which are a comfort to him and he gladly does without for love of God, be they bodily or ghostly, he shall find them all in God again as though they had belonged to him and he had left them of his own accord. Let us willingly consent to be bereft of everything, for God in whose love we cry quits and are consoled with all love's consolations.

That experiences of this sort should be given up at times in the cause of charity we gather from Paul's words, 'I have wished to be separated from Christ for love of my brethren.' What he meant was this. He was not thinking of love in the first sense, that he would never wish to leave, not for an instant, not for anything on earth or yet in heaven: he meant its consolations. Yet know, the friends of God are never comfortless, for what God wills is their very greatest comfort, whether it be comfort or discomfort.

11. What to do on missing God who is in hiding

It must be understood that good-will misses nothing of God, but the mind is sometimes lacking in perception and is very apt to fancy that God has passed it by. Then what is to be done? Exactly the same as thou wouldst do if thou wert in the greatest comfort. Learn not to vary in the depths of woe but to behave in every way the same. Man's best chance of finding God is where he left him. As it was with thee when thou last thou hadst him, so let it be now while thou hast lost him, then thou shalt find him. Good-will never loses, never misses God at any time. People often say, We have good-will. Theirs is not God's will though; they want to have their

own way and dictate to God to do so and so. That is not good-will. We must find out from God what his will is. Broadly speaking, what God wills is that we should give up willing. St Paul's friendly converse with our Lord, who spoke freely with him, availed him not one whit till he surrendered his own will and said, 'Lord, what wilt thou that I do?' Our Lord well knew what he had to do. So, too, when the angel appeared before our Lady: nothing she had so far done or said would ever have made her the mother of God, but the moment she gave up her will behold her true mother of the eternal God's Word: suddenly she conceived God. He was her natural son. There is no making of a proper man without surrender of the will. In fact, unless we do give up our will without reserve we cannot work with God at all. But suppose it came about that we did give up our own will altogether and had the heart to rid ourselves of every single thing inside and out for God, then we should have made all things and not before. Of such people few are to be found. Wittingly or unwittingly they want something definite, some experience of higher things; they are set on this condition or that boon. It is nothing whatever but own-will. Abandon to God altogether thy self and all things without any qualms as to what he will do with his own. There are thousands of people dead and gone to heaven who never really gave up their own wills. There is no true and perfect will till, entering wholly into God's will, a man has no will of his own. The more this is the case with him the more and the more safely he is established in God. One *Ave Maria* said thus, with self-forgetfulness is better than a thousand said without; better one step in this way than a journey over seas in any other.

One who has quite done like this with everything of his is so safe in God that in order to get at him we must reckon with God first, for he is right in God with God all round him, as my cowl is round my head, and any person laying hands on me will first come in contact with my habit. Likewise when I drink, the draught has first to pass my tongue; there the

drink is flavoured. If my tongue is furred with bitter then however sweet the wine is in itself it will be soured on its way to me. The fact is that a man, once he escapes for good from his possessions, is fenced about with God, and creature cannot touch him without first encountering God, and anything to reach him must go by way of God, so it gets a flavour of him and becomes divine. However great the suffering if it comes through God God bears the brunt of it. Not the least suffering can befall a man, but so far as he shifts it on to God—some mischance, it may be, or unpleasantness—it falls infinitely harder upon God than on the man and is more against the grain with him than with anyone. But if God puts up with it for some special benefit he foresees to thee, and if thou wilt bear what God does and which through him reaches thee, why then it stands to reason it will be fraught with God, the shameful and the bitter like the sweet, the blackest darkness like the clearest light, it all smacks of God and is divine, for everything betrays him that happens to the man who has no taste for other things, no eyes for other things, and is therefore sensible of God in the depths of bitterness as at the height of sweetness.

Light shines in the darkness, there we are aware of it. What good is light or learning unless people can enjoy it? In darkness, in suffering, they shall see the light.

The more we have the less we own. The man who is quit of his possessions is never at a loss for God. Granting he blunders in some word or deed, or something happens to go wrong, if God was the occasion of the act he needs must take the blame and on no account should it interfere with thy work at all. Of this we find examples in St Bernard and many other saints. Never in this life are we altogether safe from happenings of the kind. But because rats sometimes chance among the corn we do not therefore throw away good grain. To the proper man and well acquaint with God all such sufferings and mishaps are in truth a great advantage, since to the good all things work for good (as St Paul says, and also St Augustine), aye sins even.

12. Sin, the right attitude towards it, if we find we are in sin

To have sinned is not sin once it is repented of. Let none consent to sin for anything in time or in eternity, not mortal or venial or any sin whatever. He who is wise in the ways of God will not forget that his trusty and amiable God has brought him out of sin to a godly life and of one who was a foe has made a friend, which is better than making a new earth. This is one of the best reasons why a man should range himself once for all upon the side of God, and it is astonishing how it fires a man with strong and lofty purpose and makes him give up all pretensions of his own. And once confirmed in the will of God no one would wish that there should not have happened the sin he fell into ; not because it was ungodly but rather as committing thee to greater love, who art abased and humbled by it, than as just a disobedience to God. Withal thou canst safely trust to God not to have sent it thee except to bring out thy best side. Once a man is past all sinning, has turned his back on it for good and all, then God treats him as though he had never fallen into sin ; he will not let his sins weigh for one moment with him. Though they were in number as the sins of all mankind God would never let them count but would be as friendly with him as he ever was with creature ; if he finds him ready now he will take no notice of what he was before. God is a present God : as he finds thee so he takes thee and accepts thee—not what thou mayst have been but what thou art this instant. All the wrong and the reproach that is brought on God by sin he gladly bears and has borne many a year in order that mortals might arrive at a lively understanding of his love and the more to rouse their love and gratitude and fan the flame of their devotion—the normal and proper reaction from their sin. For this reason God is willing to bear the brunt of sins and often winks at them, mostly sending them to people for whom he has provided some high destiny. See. Who was dearer to our Lord or more intimate with him than his apostles ?

Not one of them but fell into mortal sin, all of them were mortal sinners. In the Old Testament as well as in the New he repeatedly showed this to be true of those who afterwards were far the dearest to him ; and still in our own day we rarely hear of anyone reaching a high level of perfection without some untowardness to start with, it being the purpose of our Lord that, recognising his great mercy, we shall be spurred to more and truer devotion and humility. For with the renewal of rue love revives and waxes apace.

13. Two sorts of rue

Rue is of two kinds. The one is temporal or sensible, the other is divine and supernatural. The temporal one is ever dragging downwards into deeper woe and setting us lamenting as it were a prey to perennial doubt : rue in wretchedness which gets no forrader, leads nowhere.

Godly rue is quite another thing. No sooner is a man convinced of his offence than straightway he betakes himself to God, and having resolutely set his face against all sin and in lively faith aspiring to God, he wins downright certainty whence springs a spiritual joy which lifts the soul out of grief and misery and makes her fast to God. The faultier he finds himself, the more flagrant his misdeeds, the more he needs wholeheartedly to bind himself to God in whom is no sin or imperfection. And the best stand a man can take once he has set his heart on God is that of being sinless in virtue of his godly rue. The worse we think our sins to be the readier God is to forgive the sins, to come into the soul and drive them out, for everyone tries hardest to get rid of the things he most dislikes, so the more and bigger the sins are the more pleased God is to pardon them and the more prompt the more he hates them. When this divine repentance reaches up to God then, quicker than I can shut my eyes, all the sins have vanished in the sink of God, wiped out as utterly as though they had not been, by saving rue.

14. Sure trust and hope

True and perfect love is shown by having lively hope and trust in God. There is no better proof of love than trust. Wholehearted love for another must imply trust, and with God all we dare to expect does really come true, and a thousandfold more. And just as we never can love God too much so neither can we ever put too much faith in him. Of all the things a man can do nothing is so seemly as putting trust in God. Not one of those who ever had great confidence in God did he ever fail; he wrought great things with them. For well he knew that this faith always comes from love, though faith is not the only thing love has: it has actual knowledge, absolute certainty.

15. The double certainty of eternal life

There are in this life two kinds of certainty of eternal life. One is what God tells a man himself or sends him word of by an angel or shows him in some rare illumination. This happens seldom and to very few. The other is a great deal better and more salutary and very often comes to the perfect lover. Here, his intimacy with and love towards his God give him perfect confidence, and he is so sure that he loves him just the same in all creatures. Though creatures all denied him and forswore him, aye, though God denied himself, he would have no qualm, for love knows no mistrust but thinks that all is well, nor is there any call for words 'twixt lover and beloved; by the very fact of feeling him his friend he is suddenly aware of what is good for him and proper to his happiness. Fond as thy love for him may be yet of this be sure, his is infinitely dearer and more fond for thee and he has vastly greater faith in thee; he is good-faith itself, so we may be certain of him and all his lovers are. This certainty is ever so much greater than the first and more complete and real and is without delusion. The telling might deceive and throw a false light very likely. But this is felt in all the powers of the soul and will not mislead his genuine lovers. They will no more doubt than they

doubt God, for love drives out all fear; there is no fear in love, as St John says, and also it is written, 'love covers a multitude of sins.' Where there are sins there is no perfect trust or love, but love entirely masks sin; it has no sense of sin. Not that no sins have been committed, but suddenly they are blotted out and vanish as though they had not been. God's works are all done suddenly, abundantly: whom he forgives he forgives outright and altogether and rather much than little as becomes entire trust.

I rate this knowledge much, nay incomparably higher than the first. It brings more reward and is surer than the other and not hindered by sin or by anything. For whom God finds alike in love he adjudges equal, whether his misdeeds are great or nil, only, from him who is forgiven more more love is expected, as our Lord Jesus said, 'To whom more is forgiven must love more.'

16. True penitence and holy living

Many people hope great things from physical austerities, fasting, going bare-foot and the like, penances so-called. But the best penitence of all, the one which profits us profoundly and supremely, is to turn one's back upon whatever in oneself and creatures is not downright God and godly and face right round towards God in unwavering devotion, thoughts and longings big with him. In whatever work thou dost feel this most that is best for thee. As it increases more and more just so much more true grows thy penitence and rue and so much more is washed away thy sin and all the pain. I make bold to say that couldst thou suddenly and finally set thy face against all sin with real repugnance and distaste and resolutely turn to God, then, though thou hadst committed every sin that ever was from the days of Adam, or that ever shall be done, the whole of it would be forgiven thee outright and the pain as well, so that on dying then and there thou wouldst rise up before the face of God. Such is true repentance, and it blossoms at its rarest in the perfect penitence of our Lord Jesus Christ's

most precious passion. The more a man succeeds in copying this the more his sin will fade away and the throes of sin. We ought to make a habit in everything we do of copying the life and works of our Lord Jesus Christ, his doing and forbearing, his passion and his action, always bearing him in mind as he has been minding us.

This penitence means simply a mind transcending things, recollected in God. In whatever practices thou art most apt to compass this those same pursue most freely. And finding thou art baulked of it by any outward discipline—watching, fasting, reading or whatever it may be—have no hesitation but leave it off at once and fear not for thy penitence. God does not look at the deeds themselves but only at the will, the motive, the feeling in the work. To him it matters little what we do; all he minds about is the spirit that we do it in and that it is himself that we always have in view. All too greedy is the man who is not satisfied with God. All thy works are well rewarded by thy God knowing of them and thy having him for goal therein. Therewith do thou always be content. The more wholly and solely he occupies thy mind the more really will thy deeds blot out thy sins. And bethink thee too, God was the common saviour of the entire world, for which I am beholden unto him far more than if he had rescued me alone. So also thou shalt be the common saviour of all that I have spoilt in me by sin if with it all thou simply wilt commit thyself to him. When thou hast marred all of thine with sin, and heart, mind, body, soul, and powers—what is thine and in thee is all sick to death and rotten to the core, then flee from it to him in whom there is no imperfection but all good and let him be the common cure for all the maladies in thee, inward and outward.

17. How to be all peace, and, finding oneself not leading the laborious life of Christ and many of the saints, how to follow after God

People are apt to weary and to get discouraged because the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and also of the saints was so

austere and so laborious while they themselves are hardly equal to that sort of thing nor are they much inclined to it. When they find themselves so different in this respect they think they must be very far from God, judging by their failure to follow in his footsteps. This is wrong. On no account let anyone suppose that he is far from God because of his infirmities or faults or for any other reason. If at any time thy great shortcomings make an outcast of thee and thou canst not take thyself as being nigh to God, take it then at any rate that he is nigh to thee, for it is most mischievous to set God at a distance. Man goes far away or near but God never goes far off; he is always standing close at hand, and even if he cannot stay within he goes no further than the door.

Now as to the strenuous life of imitation. Mark how it applies to thee. It is for thee to see and to have noted whereto God admonishes thee most, for people are by no means all called upon to follow the same route to God, as St Paul points out. Supposing then thou findest that thy best course does not lie in great bodily activity and strenuous work nor in privations, things after all of little worth unless a man is specially driven thereto by God and is strong enough to stand them without disturbing his interior life, in this case be at peace and think no more about it. Thou wilt say, perhaps, 'If it is no great matter, why have our forbears done these things and numbers of the saints?' Remember, our Lord has given them this way and he gave them too the strength for it, so they were able to pursue that way and him, what fell from him. That was the best for them, but God has not bound up man's salvation with any given way. What one way has, what possibilities, with these God has furnished all good ways without exception, for one good never clashes with another, and by the same token people ought to realize that they do wrong to say, when they come across or hear about some admirable person, that because he does not use their way it is all labour lost: they dislike his method, so they decry as well his virtues and intentions. That is wrong. We ought

to pay far more respect to other people's methods and despise no one's way. But let each one stick to his own way and, bringing all the other ways into line with that, profit in his own way by the merits of them all. Change of method makes for instability of mind as well as mode. What you get in one way may be got in any other provided it is sound and good and God is the only thing in view, nor are all men able to travel the same road. This applies to copying the austerities of certain saints—a way it is well to bear in mind and haply it might suit thee for all thou durst not follow it.

Thou wilt say, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ always took the highest way, we ought by rights always to follow him.'—True, our Lord should be followed, generally speaking, but not in every detail. Our Lord fasted forty days: no one is called upon to copy him in that. Many things Christ did meaning us to copy the spirit not the letter; we must try to follow him intelligently, for he sets more store by what we think than by what we do. We have always got to follow him in the proper way.—'What way?'—How and in what way has to be decided in each case. As I have often said, I rank a mental act far higher than a bodily one.—'How do you mean?'—Christ fasted forty days. Follow him by noticing what thou art most inclined for: refuse it and look to thyself. It will profit thee more to deny thyself unconcerned than to fast from food altogether. And by the same token thou shalt sometimes find it harder to keep back a single word than not to speak at all. Just as it is sometimes harder to brook some idle taunt than to bear a heavy blow, and more difficult to be alone in company than in the desert; and the giving up of some trifling thing will frequently cost more than something big, and doing some small action more than one accounted fine. So a man can quite well follow our Lord by way of his own weakness, and need not, must not, think him far away.

18. The way to take nice food, fine clothes, and gay companionship when these come in the natural course

This way rules out all worry about food or clothes, that they seem too good for thee, but thou dost train thy ground and mind to dwell on a much higher plane than these, where nothing moves it to desire or thought save God alone. It must transcend all other things. And why? Because that were a feeble mind that could be swayed by outward habit: the inner ought to rule the outer so far as it concerns thyself alone. But for the rest it is permissible to take life's blessings with both hands provided thou dost know thyself prepared in the opposite event to take them just us gladly. This applies to food and friends and kindred, to anything God gives and takes away. So better than anything, I think, is the wholesale abandonment of oneself to God, taking it with joy and thankfulness when he sees fit to visit something on us, shame or travail or any kind of suffering, and rather be led thereto by God than bring it on ourselves. Having the will to learn from God and to be always imitating him all will be well with thee, and then thou art entitled to enjoy thy honours and thy comforts; but when hardship and disgrace betide thou must consent to bear them too and bear them cheerfully. With a full sense of right may those eat well who are just as ready to go hungry. Doubtless this is why God spares his friends so many and great sufferings, a thing his scrupulous good faith would not otherwise allow, seeing the many and great benefits of suffering, and, though he does not like nor is it seemly for him to economise good things, he will on occasion be content with good intention, whereas another time he excuses not one jot of suffering because of the untold advantages of suffering. As long as God is satisfied do thou rest content. If he is pleased to want something else of thee, still rest content.

We ought to be too much at one with God in will to worry very much about ways and works. But avoid especially anything remarkable whether in dress or food or speech, high-

flown language, for example, or eccentric gestures which serve no useful purpose. But all singular behaviour is not forbidden thee, far from it. Many a time and with many people one must take an independent line. An extraordinary person will do extraordinary things very often and in various ways. Inwardly we ought to be conformed to our Lord Jesus Christ in all particulars, so that within us we may find the perfect reflection of his works and of his godly form; we want to reproduce in us as good a likeness as we can of all his doings. Thou shalt work and he shall accept. Do thou thy work with this single thought, this one intention; train thy mind to it at all times till in all thy works thou art the image of him.

19. Why God often lets good people, people who are really good, be prevented from doing their good works

The good God often lets his friends fall sick so that every prop they lean on or might cling to may give way. Loving souls find so much joy in doing many and great feats in the way of vigils, fasts, and so forth, or other things uncommonly fine and difficult, it gives them intense pleasure and support and hope. In work they find help, refuge and firm foothold, and it is precisely this that our God would knock away so that he himself may be their only prop and stay, and he does it out of kindness and compassion, for God wants nothing for his works excepting his own goodness. Our acts in no way help to make God give or do to us anything whatever. It is this idea our Lord would have his friends get rid of, so he undermines their faith in it to make them trust in him alone who intends bestowing largesse on them not for any reason but for love, that he may be their comfort and their stay and that they, finding that they themselves are really nothing, may admire in all the great gifts of God. For the more void and passive the mind that falls on God and is upheld by him, the deeper the man is gotten into God and the more receptive is he to the precious gifts of God. Man must build on God alone.

20. Our Lord's body, how we ought to take it often and in what way and frame of mind

Whoso would fain receive the body of our Lord ought not to mind so much about his feelings and emotions, the depth of his fervour and devotion, but he ought to make sure about his will and frame of mind. Attach small weight to what thou feelest, but pay great heed to that which thou receivest and to thy intention. Anyone who wants to go freely to our Lord must make it his first care that his conscience is without reproach. Secondly, his personal will must be set on God so that he takes no interest, no pleasure in anything but God or things right godly and anything ungodly comes amiss to him. A man can tell how far from or how near he is to God by the way this test applies to him. Thirdly, his devotion to the sacrament and to our Lord must grow by feeding on it, and his reverence not decay. But one man's meat is often another man's poison. Look therefore to thyself, that thy love to God is waxing and thy awe not on the wane. Then the oftener thou goest to the sacrament the better and more salutary for thee. In this case let no argument or preaching scare thee from thy God, the oftener the better and the more pleased God will be. For our Lord delights to dwell in and with mankind.

'Alas, Sir,' thou wilt say, 'but I feel so bare and cold and dull, I durst not face our Lord.'—All the more reason, so I say, to betake thee to thy God, in him to be made whole and with him to be happily united, for in the sacrament thou shalt find grace and nowhere else as well: thy bodily powers are then recollected and focussed by the saving power of the corporal presence of the body of the Lord, the scattered senses all being gathered up and therein atoned, while those with a too downward bent are raised and duly offered up to God and by the amiable God are taught the inward way till, weaned from the hindrances of mortal, temporal things, they get an appetite for the things of God by whose body they are strengthened and renewed. We shall be changed into him, be suddenly

at-oned, so that his is ours and all ours is his: our heart and his one heart, our body and his one body. Our entire mind and will, thoughts, powers, members, are transported into him, so we feel and are aware of him in all our powers, body and soul.

Thou dost object, 'But, Sir, I am aware of nothing more in me than poverty, how then dare I approach him?'—I say, if thou wouldst change thy poverty go to the treasure, ready to thine hand, of boundless plenty and get rich; for thou must know in thine own heart that he and he alone is treasure to content thee and fill thee to the full. I will betake myself to thee and let thy riches end my penury, and all thy boundless superfluity fill up my emptiness: thy infinite incomprehensible divinity perfect my all too base and corrupt humanity.

'Alas, Sir, I have sinned too much, I am not able to atone.'—Go to him about it, he has fully atoned for every imperfection; in him thou canst well offer up to thy heavenly Father worthy sacrifice for all thy sin.

'Gladly, Sir, would I render thanks, but I cannot do it.'—Go thou to him, he is the one thankoffering that is welcome to the Father: the infinite, true-spoken, perfect praise of all God's goodness. In short, if thou wouldst be at once rid of all thy sins and, robed in graces and in virtues, be happily led back into thy source, then let thy life be such that thou durst receive the sacrament worthily and often, so shalt thou be atoned with him and ennobled by his body. Aye, in the body of our Lord the soul is so much the same as God that none of the angels, not Cherubim or Seraphim, can find the slightest difference between them. Where they find God there they find the soul, and where the soul there God. Never was such close union; the soul is much more closely knit to God than body is to soul in the making of a man. The union is more intimate than when a drop of water is poured into a vat of wine; that would be wine and water, but the other is transformed into the same so that no creature can detect a difference.

Peradventure thou wilt say, 'How can that be? I have no

knowledge of it.'—What does that matter? The less thou knowest and the more firmly thou believest the more laudable thy faith and the more highly to be valued and commended, for perfect faith means, in mankind, a great deal more than make-believe. Therein we have actual knowledge. In fact, true faith is the one thing needful. We seem to find more good in one thing than another but that is simply due to outward limitations: there is no more in one thing than another. With faith the same we find the same and have the same.

Thou dost object, 'How can I believe in higher things while I am not in the right state but find myself imperfect and prone to many things?'—See. Two things belong to you which our Lord had as well. He had his higher and his lower powers with their two activities. His superior powers were in possession and enjoyment of eternal bliss. But his inferior powers were at the same moment in extremity of suffering and struggle upon earth, yet not one of them hindered any other in its work. So with thee, thy higher powers must be raised up into God, offered up without reserve and dedicated to him. Moreover, we ought really to leave all suffering to the body with its lower powers and senses, while the spirit ascends with entire power and plunges, free, into its God. The sufferings of the senses and the lower powers do not trouble it, neither does their strife, for the longer and harder fought the battle the finer and more glorious the triumph and the fruits of victory. The fiercer the onslaught and the lustier the blows of vice the more proof will be thy virtue if thy soul prevails, and the dearer to thy God.

If thou wouldst worthily receive thy God see to it that thy higher powers are set upon thy God, thy will bent on his will, thy thoughts full of him and thy faith steady in him. No one ever takes the body of our Lord like this without receiving special meed of grace, and the oftener the better. Believe me, it is possible to take the body of our Lord in a state of recollection and intention that, provided he is living a well-regulated life, will admit him to the lowest choir of angels. On occasion

he might take it so as to be raised into the second. It might even be received in a frame of mind to warrant thy admission to the eighth choir or the ninth. It follows that if there were two men living just alike except that one of them beyond the other had on one occasion taken our Lord's body much more worthily, this would make him to the other as it were a blazing sun, because of his rare union with God.

This taking, this blessed partaking of the body of our Lord is not merely a matter of physical food, it is a matter of spiritual nourishment received by the appetitive mind in prayer and union. This (spiritual fare) a man may take to such good purpose that he becomes more rich in grace than anyone on earth. He may do so a thousand times a day and more, be he where he may, be he sick or sound. But he must prepare for it sacramentally: wisely and methodically, greatly longing. If he lacks regularity or ardour he must have the courage to take himself in hand, and with perseverance he shall be holy here in time and blessed in eternity. Grant us this O Lord of truth, and love of chastity and life eternal. Amen.

21. Devotion

When a man is going to take our Lord's body he will do well to have nothing very serious weighing on his mind. So it is meet and very helpful to be shriven beforehand, even when he has an easy conscience, for the sake of the fruits of the sacrament of penance. But suppose his conscience pricks him and he is hindered from going to confession, then let him hie him to his God, and with bitter rue acknowledge himself wrong, after which he may rest easy till the time comes to be shriven. Meanwhile, if he find relief from the haunt of and remorse for sin, then he may take it that God too has forgot. We ought to confess to God before doing so to man, and, if we are in fault, we are bound to think it grave in the eyes of God and punish it severely. Further, we ought, when going to the sacrament [not] readily to change our plans and give up the

idea in order to attend to other people's troubles, provided our intention is right and godly and beyond reproach.

We must learn to act without attachment. But it is rare for anyone untrained to reach the stage at which he is proof against disturbance by any act or anybody. This needs prodigiously hard work; and for God to be as present and to show as plainly to him at all times and in all company, that is for the expert and demands especially two things. One is that the man be closeted within himself where his mind is safe from images of outside things which remain external to him and, alien as they are, cannot traffic or foregather with him or find any room in him at all. Secondly, inventions of the mind itself, ideas, spontaneous notions or images of things outside or whatever comes into his head, he must give no quarter to on pain of scattering himself and being sold into multiplicity. His powers must all be trained to turn and face his inner self.

Thou dost object, 'But one must turn outwards to do outward works; no work is wrought except in its own mode.'—True. But to the expert soul outward modes are not merely outward things: to the interior soul all things are modes of the Deity within. This can never be the case unless a man devotes his whole attention to the practice of God's presence, then he gets to be God-conscious all the while. Nothing is so proper to the mind or so present or so near as God. Never of its own accord would it turn elsewhere. To creature it never turns at all without violence or wrong and being all broken and perverted. Once corrupted in the young, or indeed in anyone, it is very hard to put it right, but no effort should be spared to correct its vicious habits. For however natural and proper God is to the mind, once it turns aside to make common cause with creatures and falls into their ways, it becomes correspondingly enfeebled and less master of itself, a serious handicap to good intentions, which makes it barely possible to recover the lost ground. And even if he does so a man will always have to be on the defensive.

It should be a man's first care to discipline himself both well

and strictly. For a raw and untrained person to try and play the part and do the same as a proficient would be fatal to him; he would never come to any good. Only when a man is weaned from and is rid of things is he truly qualified in everything he does to use or to refuse them with impunity. But to dwell upon a thing and take pleasure in it and set one's heart upon it—meat or drink or whatever it may be—that is bound to be disastrous to the untutored soul. We have got to make a habit of not seeking or taking what is ours in anything at all but to finding and seizing God in everything. God gives no gift nor ever gave one for any man to have and rest therein; every gift he ever gave in heaven or earth he gave with the intent to give one gift: himself. With these gifts every one of them he means to prepare us for the gift of his own self, and all the works God ever wrought in heaven and on earth he wrought with but one end in view, to accomplish that, *i.e.* to hallow them, that he might hallow us. Therefore I say: in every gift and in every work we must learn to see God and not be satisfied with any thing or stop in any thing. In no wise is this life a resting-place for us or for anyone however far he has progressed. Above all things it behoves us ever to be prepared for the gift of God and ever newly. In short, I say concerning anybody who is bent on getting from our Lord something she is not well prepared for, that in my opinion if God did give his gift to her in this unready state it would be her undoing.

Question. 'Why was she not ready? She had the will to be, and you say that will is omnipotent, that everything, perfection, lies in it.' So it does, but *will* is to be taken in two senses. On the one hand, we have contingent will, non-essential will; on the other, providential will, creative will, habitual will. Now it is not enough, in seeking union with God, to enjoy occasional detachment of the mind, it needs expert, habitual detachment, going on before and after; then we receive great things from God and God in these things. To be unprepared is to lose the gift and God in the gift. This

is why God cannot always give us things as we ask for them. It is no fault of his; he is a thousand times more ready to bestow than we are to receive. But we do him violence and wrong, hindering his natural work by our unreadiness. A man must learn in every gift to sacrifice himself to him, keeping nothing of his own and seeking nothing for himself, not profit nor enjoyment, nor inwardness nor sweetness nor reward nor heaven nor own-will. God never gave himself nor ever does in any other's will. He only gives himself in his own will. Where God finds his will there he bestows himself, he lets himself in with all he is. And the more we die to our own the more do we really live in his.

It is not enough then to resign ourselves just once with all we have and can, but we must keep on doing it afresh so as to simplify and detach ourselves completely. The great thing is, not to be content with virtues that are merely theoretical, obedience for example, and poverty, and so on; but we ourselves must practise the works and fruits of virtue, putting ourselves often to the test, and be willing and anxious to be called upon by people and made use of. And it is not enough to do the works of virtue, to obey, for instance, or be poor or give up things or in other ways humble and resign ourselves, but we must go further, never stopping till virtue in itself, in its cause, is won. And in proof that it is ours we shall find ourselves bent chiefly upon virtue and doing virtuous deeds spontaneously, with no idea of their being fine or important things—they are done as a matter of course and for love of virtue rather than for any why. Then we have virtue in perfection, not before. We must school ourselves in riddance to the point of having no personal belongings. We may realize it or not, but attacks of restlessness are due solely to the personal will. We ought then to commit ourselves and all our thoughts, will and desire-free, to the good-will of God therewith unreservedly to desire and will.

Question. 'Is it right to be willing to forgo the sweets of God: may this not easily be due to laziness?'—It is to be

judged by the results. Whether it comes from sloth or from genuine dispassion and renunciation we can tell by whether, when feeling wholly God-forsaken, we find ourselves as staunch to him as when the sense of him was keenest, and behave the same, exactly, as under those conditions, refusing every help and consolation just as we should do if we felt God present.

To the righteous man in his perfectly good-will no time can be too short. For where his will is willing to perfection all it can—not only now, but all he would do if he could, supposing he lived a thousand years—that will counts equal to the thousand years' performance : he has done it all in the eyes of God.

22. How we ought to follow God, and about good ways

The man who is about to start on some new life or work should betake him to his God, and giving his whole mind to it earnestly entreat him to dispose things for the best, as shall best please and most honour him, not with any will or intention of his own, just the will of God and nothing else. Then whatever God shall send let him take it straight from God, as a veritable God-send, and be at peace. Later on he will perhaps prefer some other way, and then he should bethink himself, 'It was this way God gave thee, so he must think it best.' Trusting God for this let him bring all good ways into line therewith and use all things of whatever kind in and according to it. The benefits that God contrives to give in any one way are to be found and gotten in good ways one and all, and we ought to find in one way the good things common to them, not those peculiar to that one. For man must always do one thing, he cannot do them all. He must always be one thing and in that one find all. To try and do everything, this as well as that, to give up his own method for another which for the moment he likes better, believe me, is a fertile source of instability, and a better man were he who left the world to go into some Order than he who left one Order to go into another,

however holy it might be. Owing to the change of way. A man should choose a good way and abide by it, embodying in it good ways of all kinds, only taking care they are acceptable to God, not embarking upon one to-day and another one to-morrow, then he need not be afraid of missing anything. With God we can miss nothing: God never misses anything, and in God's company no more do we. So take one thing from God and embody in it all good things. If they are incompatible, one at variance with another, that is a certain sign it does not come from God. One good does not quarrel with another, as our Lord observed, 'A kingdom divided against itself shall not stand'; and he also said, 'He who is not for me is against me, and he who gathereth not with me scattereth,' so let this be thy touchstone: any good which clashes with, which destroys another good, albeit a minor one, does not come from God. It ought to reinforce not cancel.

Briefly the truth is this and no mistake: God gives to each one what is best for him, not a doubt of it, and he never takes him lying down if he could have found him standing up, for the divinity of God takes all things in their prime.[1]

It is questioned, Why then does God not take those people he knows are going to lapse from baptismal grace and let them die in infancy, before they come to years of discretion, seeing as he does that they are doomed to fall and not rise again? Would not that be the best thing for them?

I answer that, God is not the destroyer of anything good, he is the fulfiller. God is not the destroyer of nature, he is the perfecter of it. Neither does grace destroy nature, it crowns it. If God destroyed nature at the start like that it would be wronged and outraged. That is not his way. Man has free will wherewith to make his choice 'twixt good and evil, and when God lays before him in ill-doing death and in well-doing life eternal, he must be free and master of his actions, no puppet dancing to another's piping. Grace does not destroy

[1] In some MSS. the Tractate proper ends here. See Diederichs, p. 38, note.

nature, it consummates it. (Glory does not destroy grace, it finishes it), for glory is perfected grace. It is not in God to destroy anything that has being: he is the finisher of all things. Therefore let us not destroy any the least good in us, not any homely way for something more imposing, but pursue it to its end in the Supreme.

So ran the talk about making a fresh start in life, and I gave my verdict in the sense that we ought by rights to be seeking God in all things and finding God at all times as well as in all places, in any company and in every guise. In this way it is possible to keep on making progress, ever getting better and never to stop growing.

23. Works inward and outward

Suppose a man withdraws into himself with all his powers physical and mental and finds himself in a state of mind free from all images and definition, without any activity at all, subjective or objective. Then he should carefully consider whether there is anything that specially attracts him. If he feels no inclination to take up any work and interest himself therein he had better break into some activity internal or external, but he must not let himself be satisfied with anything, however good it seems to be or is, that means submitting to austerities or doing violence to his feelings: anything wherein he may be said to be more wrought upon than working, for he has to learn to co-operate with his God. Not that a man should give up or neglect or forget about his interior life, but he must find out how to work in it and with it and from it, his unity breaking into activity and his activity conducing to his unity, till he acquires the habit of acting passively (acting without attachment). The thing to do is to turn our attention to this interior activity and exploit it in reading, prayer, or outward work as the case may be. If the outward work disturbs the inner then pursue the inner, but the best way to co-operate with God is to do them both together.

The question is, how can one work with God? By being dead to self and to all activities. St Dionysius says, 'He speaks best of God who in the fullness of his interior riches can best hold his peace.' Here ideas and actions fail: praise, thanksgiving, or whatever he might do.

Answer. A single act remains to him, one proper and peculiar to himself; it is, of course, the naughting of himself; but this naughting, this undoing of himself never goes so far but it remains unfinished unless God brings the same to perfection in himself. Humility is deep enough when God has mortified a man with the man himself, then not till then is man satisfied, and the claims of virtue.

Question. How can God mortify a man with (the man) himself? It seems as though the naughting of man means divine exaltation, for in the gospel it says, 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted'?

Answer. Yes and no. To humble himself is not enough, God has to do it, then he shall be exalted. Not that his abasement is one thing and his exaltation is another: the highest height of exaltation lies in the low ground of humility. For the lower the valley the higher the hills and the more towering the peaks. The deeper the well the higher it is: depth and height are the same. So he who is most lowly is most lofty, and hence the saying of our Lord, 'Whosoever would be chief among you let him become your servant.' To be the one he must become the other. This being depends on that becoming. He who is becoming the least is in truth the greatest, but he who has become the least is even now greatest of all. Thus the words of the evangelist are true and are fulfilled: 'He who humbles himself shall be exalted.' Our real being is essentially a not-becoming. 'They are become rich in all virtues,' so it is written. But believe me this can never be until we are poor of all things. To have all we must give all. Just dealing, that, and a fair bargain, as I explained once long ago. God grants the freehold of himself and the whole of things and exacts from us in payment all our possessions down.

Aye in very truth, God flatly refuses to let us keep of our personal property as much as might find lodgment in my eye, for of all the gifts he ever made us, whether of nature or of grace, not one was ever given save with the idea that we should have nothing of our own: nothing of the sort did he ever give, not to his mother nor to any human being nor to any creature. In order to teach us and by way of warning against this very thing he will often deprive us of both bodily and spiritual goods. We can take no credit for them, that belongs to him alone, and we ought always to have things as though they had been lent to us, not given: without any sense of ownership, whether in soul or body, possessions, powers, worldly goods and honours, friends and family, house or home or anything.

'Why does God make such a point of this?'—Because he wants to be our own himself, wholly and solely. This is his chief delight, his play, and the more and better he succeeds the greater is his joy and bliss. For the more we have of things the less of him we own and the fewer things we have the more we have gotten him and his. That is why our Lord in laying down the principles of happiness headed the list with poverty of spirit; he did this in the first place as a sign that blessings and perfections one and all are grounded in poverty of spirit. And rightly, for any ground whereon good, generally speaking, could be built would be nothing, neither this nor that. If we keep clear of things which are outside us God will give us in exchange the whole contents of heaven: heaven itself with all its powers and all that ever emanated from it. What the saints and angels have shall belong to us as well as them. The less then anything is mine as opposed to being a way of escaping from myself, the more will God with all he is and promises be altogether mine, mine the same as his, no more or less. More a thousandfold shall it be mine own than anything a man did ever gain and keep it in a box, any personal possession. Never was anything so own as God shall be mine own with all he is and can. This

own we merit by keeping free in this life from personal possessions, from all that he is not. The more perfect and patient the poverty the more real this own will be, but the reward itself must not be looked for or regarded in the very least; the eye must never once be turned towards it with a view to gain or gift, but solely for the love of virtue.

Less have more own, or, in the words of the excellent St Paul, we ought to have 'as having nothing yet possessing all things.' He has no sense of property who does not want and lays no claim to aught within himself or outside himself, not to God or anything. Wouldst know what a really poor man is? Really poor in spirit is the man who prefers to do without all unnecessary things. Like the man who sitting naked in his tub said to mighty Alexander with the world beneath his feet, said he, 'I am a greater man than thou, for I have given up more than thou hast ever had. To me thy proud possessions are beneath contempt.' Better far is he who has no need of things and wants to do without than he who has all things of necessity. And best is he who knows how to dispense with what he has no need of. He who can dispense with most and most set things at naught has relinquished most. It seems a fine thing that for love of God a man should give a thousand marks of gold out of his own pocket, building many convents and religious houses and feeding all the poor. But far more blest were he who should refuse as much for God. And very heaven were his who was wise enough to abandon everything for God, what God gives or does not.'—'Yes, Sir,' thou sayest, 'if it was not for the fact that I am hindered by my faults.'—If thou hast faults beseech God often, if it be to his glory and if he so please, that he will cure them, for without him thou canst not. If he does cure them thank him; if not, bear it for his sake, no longer as a sinful imperfection but as salutary discipline, a good opportunity of acquiring merit and exercising patience. Never mind whether he gives thee his gift or not. He gives to each what is good for him and suits him best. For the coat to fit it must be cut to measure; what suits one will

not suit another; each must be measured for what suits him best. Even so God does the very best for each, as being the best judge of his needs. I warrant you that anyone who trusts him implicitly for this will find and have as much in the least as in the very most. Suppose God chose to grant me what he gave St Paul, I would take it, please God, gladly. But if he chooses not to give it me—and there are precious few he does allow to know it in this life—I shall hold him just as dear in his refusal and thank him just as much and be no less pleased with his withholding than his giving but as happy and content as though he gave it me, provided I am as I ought to be. By rights I ought to be so satisfied with the will of God, with God's pleasure as to working and bestowing, his will should be so dear, so precious to me that it outweighs whatever gifts might be vouchsafed or acts wrought by him in me. Then all gifts would be mine and all beings God. Creatures may do their best or worst, not one single jot can they take away. How then can I complain, seeing all human gifts belong to me? In fact I am so well content with God's treatment of me, with his giving and not giving me, that to my mind there is not a pin to choose between it and the best that I could wish.

Thou sayest, 'I fear me I do not take trouble enough or trust him as much as I might.'—This rue and bear it patiently; regard it as a discipline and be at peace. God gladly suffers despisery and shame and willingly forgoes his praise and service that they may be at rest in him who are minding him and are his people. How then not be at peace whatever he gives us or whatever we must do without? As it is written, and they are the words of our Lord, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.' The thief they are about to hang as the proper penalty for stealing; the murderer who deserves to lose his life, could they but look at it like this: 'See, thou art suffering in the cause of right when thou gettest thy deserts,' then without more ado they would be happy. In truth, however bad we are, if we accept from God whatever

he may send us, take it as from him and bear it in the name of justice, then we are blessèd. Therefore lament thee not, or rather, lament thee that thou still lamentest and that naught contents thee. The one lament permitted thee is that thou hast too much. By rights one should receive in want as one does in plenty.

'But look,' thou sayest, 'what great things God does in many people; they are overshadowed by his deity, God energizing in them, not themselves.'—Thank God for it in them, and if he grant the same to thee, in God's name welcome it; if he does not give it thee then do without it willingly with him alone in mind, not worrying as to whether God is doing thy works or whether they are being done by thee. God is bound to do them, if thy thoughts are set on him, whether he would or not. And never mind what state or way, God gives to anybody. Were I so good and holy that they put me up among the saints, people would be talking, anxious to find out whether it was grace in me or nature, quite disturbed about it. It is a great mistake. Let God operate in thee; hand the work over to him and do not disquiet thyself as to whether or no he is working with nature or above nature, for his are both nature and grace. What business is it of thine what it suits him to work with or what he is doing with thee or with anyone else? Let him work how and where and in what way he will.—Said a man who was wanting to turn a stream into his garden, 'Only let me have the water, I care not in the least what sort of channel it comes through; wood or iron, clean or rusty, it is all the same to me.' And by the same token it is wrong to be exercised about the ways and means of God's working in thee: whether it be grace or nature let him work with it and be thou at peace. So far as thou art in God so far thou art in peace and so far out of God so far without peace. Once a thing is in God it has peace: so far in God so far in peace. Judge then from time to time how far thou art in God, or otherwise, where thou hast peace or not. Where thou hast unrest there thou must be restless: unrest comes from

creature not from God. There is nothing in God to be afraid of: everything in God is altogether loveable. Neither is there any cause for sorrow.

He who has all he will, his every wish, that man has peace. None has it but the man whose will and God's are wholly one. God grant us this atonement. Amen.

II
THE BOOK OF BENEDICTUS

THE BOOK OF BENEDICTUS[1]

PART I

THE BOOK OF GODLY COMFORT

Benedictus deus et pater domini nostri Jesu Christi etc. (2 *Cor.* 1_3). That great teacher St Paul says in his epistle, 'Blessèd be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforteth us in all our tribulations.' Three kinds of tribulation may beset a man and buffet him in this land of exile. First, misfortune to outward goods; secondly, to our dearest friends; and lastly, to ourselves: shame, hardship, pain of body, and distress of mind.

So I purpose in this book to impart some teachings apt to console a man in all adversity, unhappiness, and suffering. And having therein and therefrom culled sundry general truths to comfort him in any trouble, he will find thereafter thirty rules or maxims, any one of which is sufficient for his solace, and after that again in the third part of the book he will find precepts and examples, theoretical and practical, the sayings and doings of the wise in times of tribulation.

1

In the first place, we must bear in mind that the wise and wisdom, true and truth, good and goodness, just and justice are closely related to each other. Goodness is not made nor created nor begotten, it is procreative and begets the good, and the good man, so far as he is good, is the unmade, uncreated

[1] See also Strauch, *Kleine Texte*, 55, from which Part II, *The Nobleman*, is translated.

but withal begotten child and son of goodness. Goodness procreates itself and all that it is in the good soul : knowledge, love, energy, it pours them all forth to the good man, and the good man receives all his being, knowing, love, and energy from the central depth of goodness and from that alone. Good plus goodness is no more then goodness by itself except as born and bearing, not but what born child of goodness and being born in the good are but one being, one life. All that belongs to the good man he gets both from goodness and in goodness. Therein he is and lives and dwells and there he knows himself, and all he knows and loves he wills and works with goodness and in goodness and goodness does all his works with him as it is written—and it was said by the Son—'my Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works.' All that belongs to the Father is mine ; all that is mine is my Father's : his giving is my taking.

Further let us remember that the name or word goodness stands for nothing else, neither more nor less than goodness pure and simple. But supposing we call (a man) good we take it that his goodness has been given him, infused, engendered by the unborn goodness. In the words of the gospel : 'As the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son also to have the same life in himself' : in himself, not from himself, since the Father has given it to him.

All I have said of the good and goodness equally applies to the true and truth, to the just and justice, to the wise and wisdom, to God's Son and God the Father, to every God-begotten thing that has no father upon earth and wherein is gotten no created thing, nothing but God, and wherein exists no form but that of God alone. As St John says in his gospel, 'To them gave he power to become the sons of God, which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God alone.'

By blood he means everything in man not subordinate to the human will. By fleshly he means everything in man which is subject to his will albeit reluctantly and with an inclination to carnal appetites, things common to the body

and the soul and not peculiar to the soul alone, which account for the weakness and exhaustion of their powers. By the will of man St John means the highest powers of the soul, whose nature and work is unmixed with flesh; which reside in the pure nature of the soul detached from time and place and from everything that smacks of time and space relation, that have naught in common with naught; wherein man is formed in the image of God; wherein he is of the lineage of God and God's kindred. Yet since they are not God himself but are in the soul and created with the soul therefore she must lose her own form and be transformed into God alone: born into God and out of God with only God for father. Then they too are Son, God's only Son.

I am his Son by virtue of the fact that he begets me in his nature and forms me in his image. Such an one is God's Son, good son of goodness, right son of righteousness. So far as he is simply son he is bringing forth the unborn, and as born son he has the same nature as righteousness has and is and is possessed of all the character of justice and of truth. In all this teaching which is found in the gospel and confirmed in the natural light of the rational soul there is solace for every human sorrow.

St Augustine says, 'God is not far nor long.' If thou wouldst find it neither far nor long betake thyself to God, for there a thousand years are as one day, to-day. Withal I say, in God there is no sorrow or suffering or distress. And if thou wouldst be free from all adversity and pain turn thee and cleave to God and to God only. Doubtless all thy ills are due to thy not turning into God and to God alone. If thou wert formed and gotten into righteousness alone things could no more pain thee than righteousness, than God himself.

Solomon says, 'The righteous will not grieve whatever may befall.' He does not say, the righteous man or the righteous angel, just righteous, being right, not this or that right thing, for the righteous man is son with a father upon earth; he is creature, made or created just as his father is creature made or created. He says righteous pure and simple. That has no

made or created father, and righteousness is just the same as God, so that pain and sorrow cannot molest him any more than they do God. Justice cannot sadden him, for love and joy and bliss are justice, and if justice grieved the just it would be causing sorrow to itself. Injustice, iniquity, can in no wise grieve the just, for everything created is much inferior to him and has no effect, makes no impression on the righteous, nor is it gotten into him whose only father is God.

A man then ought to set to work and deform himself of himself and creatures and know no father except God alone. Then nothing will be able to afflict or cast him down, not God nor creature, uncreated or created, and his entire being, life, knowledge, love, and wisdom will be out of God and in God and God.

There is another thing which must be borne in mind as likely to comfort us in any tribulation. It is that the just and virtuous man assuredly delights unspeakably, incomparably more in doing right than he or even the highest angel delights and rejoices in his natural being or life. Thus the saints gladly sacrificed their lives for right.

I say then: When outward ills befall the good and righteous man then if he keeps his even temper and his peace of mind it is true, as I have said, that the righteous man is proof against external happenings. But if he is perturbed by these mishaps then it stands to reason that God is only just in sending trials to a person who while pretending to be righteous and thinking himself so is yet upset by so small a thing. Since it is fair of God he has no cause to mind but rather to rejoice, far more than he does at his own life, at what rejoices man and is more good to him than this world all told; for what profits a man the whole world when he is no more?

The third important thing for us to understand is the elemental truth that the fount and living artery of universal good, essential truth and perfect consolation is God, God only, and everything not God has in itself a natural bitterness, discomfort and unhappiness, and does not make for good, which is of

God and is the same as God, but lessens, dims and hides the sweetness, joy and comfort that God gives.

And further I maintain, all sorrow comes from love of that whereof I am deprived by loss. If I mind the loss of outward things it is a certain sign that I am fond of outward things and really love sorrow and discomfort. Is it to be wondered at that I am unhappy when I like discomfort and unhappiness; when my heart seeks and my mind gives to creature the good that is God's own? I turn towards creature, whence comes by nature all discomfort, and turn my back on that which is the natural source of happiness and comfort, so what wonder I am woebegone and wretched. The fact is, it is quite impossible for God or anyone to bring true solace to a man who looks for it in creatures. But he who loves only God in creatures and creatures in God only, that man finds real and true and equal comfort everywhere.

2

Follow some considerations, thirty of them, any one of which alone should suffice to comfort the rational man in trouble. The first one is that no hardship or discomfort is without some comfort, no loss without some gain, and that is why St Paul declares that God's good faith and his natural kindness would not permit of any suffering or trial being insupportable, more than one could bear. He always provides some consolation for the help of man. Withal the saints and doctors teach that God and nature cannot brook the being or existence of undiluted evil.

I will take the case of a man who owns an hundred marks of which he loses forty and keeps sixty. If he goes on brooding over the forty he has lost he must remain lugubrious and woeful. How should he ever rid himself of disappointment and regret with his attention fixed on failure and misfortune, turning it over, figuring it out, ruefully regarding it, parleying with his loss, while his loss, for answer, hits him in the face? If only he would look instead at the sixty marks which he has left and

turn his back upon the forty which are gone—conjure up the sixty in his mind, ponder them, make much of them—he would assuredly find solace. That which is and is good can console, but that which is not nor yet good, which is not mine, lost to me, that is bound to bring trouble, vexation, chagrin.

Solomon says, 'In the days of adversity and mourning forget not the days of prosperity and happiness.' That is as good as saying, bethink thee when in trouble and misfortune of the good and comfortable things which are still within thy grasp; husband them and use them to good purpose. Just as there is comfort in the thought of the thousands of people there must be who if they had those sixty marks which are left to thee would think themselves quite wealthy, lords and ladies, and be full of joy and gratitude to God.

There is another thing that should comfort us. Suppose a man is ill, in great bodily pain, but he has his home and everything he needs in the way of food and drink and medical advice, his family to nurse him, the companionship and sympathy of friends. What of him? What of these unfortunates who have just as much or greater hardship to endure and not a soul to give them a cup of cold water? In rain and snow and bitter cold they beg their naked crust from door to door. If thou wouldst be comforted forget the ones who are more fortunate and remember those who are worse off than thee.

Further I declare, all suffering comes from loving, minding: liking or minding is the alpha and omega of suffering. I trouble about temporal things because I mind about them, because I still set store by the things of time and do not yet love God wholeheartedly, with all the affection he demands, and would make sure of getting. So is it to be wondered at if God is always sending us suffering and pain?

St Augustine says, 'Lord, I did not want to lose thee, I wanted to have creatures besides thee; it was my greed that made me lose thee. It would dishonour thee for man to have false creatures along with thee, the truth.' And elsewhere he exclaims, 'Greedy and double-faced is he who is not content

with God alone.' How should God's gift of creatures satisfy a man who is not satisfied with God himself? No virtuous man is satisfied or comforted by things; it is all pain to him, everything different from, other than God. He is always pleading, 'Lord God, my comfort, if from thy presence thou wouldst banish me give me then another thee.' When our Lord promised Moses every blessing and sent him to the Holy Land, which here means heaven, Moses exclaimed, 'O Lord, do not send me unless thou wilt come too.'

Inclination, desire, and affection are all due to *like*. Always things tend to love their likes. The pure man will love purity, the just one loves and leans to justice and his lips betray the secrets of his heart. 'Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' says our Lord, and Solomon observes how 'all the labour of a man is in his mouth.' It is a certain sign of God's not being in his heart, but only mortal, temporal creature, when anyone turns outwards in search of consolation.

The virtuous man is sore ashamed in God's eyes and his own so soon as he becomes aware of God not being in him, that God the Father is not energizing in him but miserable creature is still alive and busy there. Like David in the Psalms lamenting, 'Tears have been my meat day and night while they continually say to me, Where is thy God?' To turn to any outside thing for pleasure and comfort in dis-ease, to be eager for it, full of talk about it, is a certain sign God is not shining, is not working in me. And any proper man ought to be ashamed for good people to know of this in him. The good man never rails at losses or misfortunes; the only thing he will bewail is that he does bewail them: the fact of his taking them to heart. Philosophers declare that underneath the heavens there is fire raging, widespread and fierce with nothing in between, yet the heavens are not affected in the least. And another scripture says that the bottom of the soul tops heaven's summit. How then can he believe himself a celestial soul who is upset and hurt by such trivial things? Something else I say. There is no such thing as a good man

who does not will God's will in all particulars; God can do anything he likes, it is all one to him; by the very fact of its being God's will it is and must be good, the very best, and that is why our Lord instructed the apostles, and in them ourselves, every day to pray, 'God's will be done,' notwithstanding which when God's will is done, does come to pass, we grumble and get gloomy and depressed.

Seneca, the heathen philosopher, inquires, What is the greatest comfort in suffering and discomfort? To take it all, he says, as though it had been wished and prayed for. Having wished and prayed that God's will be done then if it is thou hast no cause to groan. It was a pagan master who exclaimed, 'Lord, supreme Father, sole ruler of the highest heaven, all that thou wilt I am prepared for, vouchsafe me will and that will in accordance with thine own.'

The good man trusts in God in the belief, the certainty, that God is good, and that it is impossible for him in his love and kindness to let any pain or suffering fall upon a man unless in lieu of some much heavier suffering or to pave the way for more earthly consolation or to compass some much better thing, something which redounds far more to God's glory. Be that as it may, simply by the fact of its being God's will and for no other reason the good man's will is so at one with, so merged into God's will and with God's will, that he is bound to will the same as God, though to his own undoing, his own damnation haply. Thus St Paul wished to be accursed from God for God and for God's glory.

The really perfect man is wont to be so dead to self, so lost in God to his own form and so transformed in the will of God that his entire happiness consists, I swear, in knowing self and all for naught; in knowing God and God alone and, all unwitting of any will or choice except God's choice and will, in 'knowing God,' to quote St Paul, 'even as he is known.' God is doing all his knowing, doing all his willing, doing all his loving in himself. Our Lord says that eternal life is simply knowing.

Doctors declare that the blest in heaven know creatures free

from any creature seeming; they know them in their common exemplar which is God, wherein God knows and loves and wills himself and everything, which God teaches us himself to long and pray for, saying: 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name': may I know thee and thee only. 'Thy kingdom come': may I know nothing, have nothing, prize nothing but thy kingdom. And so it says in the gospel, 'Blessèd are the poor in spirit,' meaning the poor in will. Accordingly we pray God that his 'will be done on earth,' in us, 'as it is in heaven,' in God himself. A man of this sort is so one, so one-willed with God that he wills exactly what God wills and in the way God wills it. If then God chooses, as he sometimes does, that I shall have committed various sins, I will not wish I had not done them and then God's will is done on earth, *i.e.* in ill-doing, 'as it is in heaven,' in well-doing. In this way one does without God for God's sake, 'is parted from God for God's sake,' and this is the only right rue for my sins, for my sin is then indolent suffering to me just as all evil is indolent suffering to God. Suffering, the deepest suffering is mine for sin—I would not sin for anything created, aye though a thousand worlds were mine eternally—and yet no pain, believe me, provided I accept the suffering in God's will, take it as being God's will. Such suffering is the only perfect suffering, springing as it does from nothing but love, sheer goodness, and divine joy. Then there comes true and is realized the claim I have put forward in this little book, namely, that the good man, so far as he is good, takes on all the character of that same goodness which God is in himself.

Just think what an amazing life a man like this must lead on earth, life as it is in heaven, in God himself! Him discomfort serves as well as comfort, pain as well as pleasure. And mark the extraordinary fortitude it brings. For with this grace, this boon that I am talking of, I am always even-tempered, always cheerful and at ease, and if I am without it I do without it for God's sake, because that is the will of God. Suppose God chooses to repair my lack I take it in God's name

and am in bliss. If God does not choose to give I take and do without in that same will of God wherein he will not, welcoming lack instead of plenty. What is the harm? God is gotten easier in wanting than receiving, there is no doubt of that, for in receiving it is the gift itself which provides the why and wherefore of a man's rejoicing. But failing to receive and getting nothing he finds nothing to rejoice in excepting Godand God's will alone.

Besides, there is this consolation, supposing that a man has lost his outward goods, his friends, his family, his eye or whatever it may be, that if he bears it well for love of God, because it is the will of God, he may be sure he has in the sight of God at least all that because of which he might refuse to bear it. Say he loses an eye. He would not have lost that eye for a thousand marks or more; well then, to God, in God, he surely has the full equivalent of what he would refuse to suffer the pain of deprivation for, and most likely this explains the saying of our Lord, 'It is better for thee to enter into life eternal with a single eye than to be lost with both.' In the same sense, probably, God said, 'He who leaves father and mother and sister and brother, or anything else, for my sake shall receive an hundredfold and eternal life.'

But it must be remembered that possession of the virtues and willingness to suffer patiently and cheerfully vary in degree, just as we see in nature one man better looking or cleverer than another. Moreover, I contend that the virtuous man, virtuous though he be, may well be moved, be shaken more or less by natural affection for father or for mother without any lapse from God or goodness while at the same time he is good, is better, in proportion as he takes less comfort in, is less subject to, less aware of natural love and fondness for father, mother, sister, brother, or himself.

Further, as I have pointed out before, if people could accept it as equally being in God's will, so far as it is God's will, that (on the one hand) human nature has shortcomings, serious lapses from God's law, starting with the first man's sins, and

that (on the other hand) were this not the case they would, also in God's will, gladly be without them, then it would all be well with them and they would assuredly be comforted in trouble. This would explain the statement of St John that the true light shines in darkness and also the dictum of St Paul, that virtue is perfected in weakness. If the thief could truly, wholly, perfectly, willingly and gladly suffer death for love of divine justice which, in accordance with God's will, decrees that evil-doers shall be put to death, no doubt he would be saved and dwell among the blessèd, for God's will is our salvation and felicity.

And another comfort. Most likely there is no one to be found who is not fond enough of some living being gladly to sacrifice an eye and go blind for a year if at the end of it he can have his sight again and at the same time save his friend from death. Now if a man is ready to sacrifice his sight on another man's behalf to prevent the death of one who in any case is bound to die ere many years have passed, surely it stands to reason that he would gladly give the twenty, thirty years perhaps that he still has to live to win his own eternal happiness: to be ever seeing God in his divine light and in God himself and all creatures.

And there is this comfort also. The good man so far as he is good, gotten of goodness alone, model of goodness, to him created things are worthless all, bitter and untoward every one. For why, their loss means liberation, the loss of pain, of drawbacks, of discomfort, rightly understood. Release from pain is indeed a comfort, and outward possessions are nothing but a worry, anxiety, dis-ease, so it is folly to bewail their loss; rather should he bewail that ease and comfort are unknown to him, that comfort has no chance to comfort. He has much more cause to grieve at not being all de-formed of creature and fully formed and set in the mould of virtue.

Let a man bethink him in his trouble that God tells the truth, he keeps his word with himself. If God failed to keep his word, his troth, he would fail in deity and would not be

God, for his word is his very nature. His word (his promise) is that our sorrow shall be turned into joy. And doubtless if I knew beyond all peradventure that my stones were going to turn into fine gold, then the more and the bigger were my stones the more precious they would be. This consideration I feel sure would give the greatest comfort to anyone in pain and trouble.

And another one of the same kind. No pot can hold two separate kinds of drink: if it has got to hold wine we shall have to pour out the water, leaving it empty and clean. And for thee to take in divine joy thou must needs throw out creature, cast it away. As St Augustine says, 'Pour out if thou wouldst be filled. Learn not to love if thou wouldst learn to love. To turn towards thou must first turn away.' In plain words: to take in, to be receptive, a thing must be empty. Philosophers tell us that the eye, if it had colour of its own, would be unable in the act of vision to see any colour that it had itself or that it had not, but since it is quite colourless it sees every colour. The wall is coloured, and it neither sees its own nor any other colour; it is insensitive to hue, to gold as well as black. Eye has it not and has it really, perceiving it with pleasure and delight.

The moral of this is that the less preoccupied and freer the powers of the soul the better, wider open they will be to receive and to conceive and the greater is their bliss and the more one they will be with what they do receive, till finally the highest power of the soul, which is quite free from things and has nothing in common with naught, gets nothing less than God himself in his own nature. And this union, this break-through, the bliss of it, is, so the masters say, beyond compare. This explains that striking saying of our Lord, 'Blessèd are the poor in spirit.' That man is poor who has not, who is indigent of, spirit: just as the eye being poor of, free from, colour is sensitive to every colour, so being poor of spirit he is all alive to spirit, spiritually receptive. God is spirit, and the fruit of the spirit is love, peace, and joy. Naked poverty, having

nothing, being empty, transmutes nature; emptiness makes water run uphill and many other marvels which we cannot tell of now.

So if thou hast a mind to find in God perfect joy and consolation see thou art quite free from creatures, from all creature consolations. Certain it is that so long as creatures do and can console thee thou shalt never find true consolation. But when nothing save God can console thee any more then verily God shall console thee and with him and in him all bliss. While things not God do comfort thee thou hast no (proper comfort) here or yonder. But when creatures fail to comfort, when thou hast no stomach for them, then thou findest it both here and yonder.

Suppose someone wanted and knew how to make a vessel absolutely empty and keep it exhausted of all filling, even air, that vessel would assuredly forget and belie its proper nature altogether, and emptiness would carry it straight up into the sky. Even so being poor and empty of all creatures the soul springs up to, into God. Likeness too and heat are causes of ascent. Likeness we ascribe to the Son in his godhood, heat and love to the Holy Ghost. Likeness generally speaking and more particularly in the first place in divine nature connotes birth of the one and likeness of one to one and with one is source and beginning of the passion-flower of love. One is beginning without any beginning. Likeness (image) is beginning gotten of the one alone, getting its being and its being a beginning from the one in the one. It is of the nature of love to arise and flow out of two as a one, as one love not two, for love is not twain; two as one natural love must needs be in will, in ardour, appetitively.

Solomon observes that water and creatures all go streaming past, hastening back into their source. And similarly it must needs be true, as I have said, that likeness and love go pressing on, burning to raise, to transport the soul into the first cause —the one, our Father namely—of everything in heaven and earth. Wherefore I maintain, the likeness born of one draws the soul into God, (God) as he is one in his unborn oneness,

and of this we have clear evidence. When ordinary fire kindles wood and burns it up in sparks it (wood) receives the fire nature and becomes like fire itself which abides just underneath the heavens. It suddenly forgets, and abandoning father and mother and sister and brother upon earth shoots up to its father in heaven. The father here below of the spark is the fire and the mother of it is the wood ; its brothers and sisters are the other sparks, and for these the first spark will not tarry: it flies up and away at top speed to its genuine father, to heaven. Anyone who really knows the truth will plainly see that the fire as fire is no true parent of the spark : the real true father of all fire, all heat, is heaven.

Furthermore, this spark, remember, is not leaving, not forgetting only its father and mother upon earth : it forgets, forsakes, itself to go of natural love to its real parent, heaven ; for though it is sure to be put out in the coldness of the air it will show its natural love for its real, heavenly Father.

And just as it was claimed above for emptiness, or purity, that in proportion as the soul is more throughly bare and poor—has less of creature, is more free from ordinary things, which are not God—she gets God better, gets more into God, is more one with God and herself in God and sees God, as St Paul observes, more face to face, (as) in an image, or reflected, even so of likeness and the fire of love I say : the stronger the likeness to the other it pursues the hotter on the trail and the better and pleasanter the going ; and the more it out-distances itself and all except its quarry the more unlike it grows to self and everything except what it is after and the liker to the object of the chase. And since likeness flows out of the one, attracting, drawing by dint of and in virtue of the one, therefore there is no rest or satisfaction whether for the drawer or the drawn till they be joined in one. So in the prophet Isaiah our Lord says in effect that no height nor depth nor likeness shall content me nor no peace of mind till I myself do shine forth in my Son, till I myself am kindled and consumed in the love of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord Jesus Christ besought his Father to make us one with him and in him : not only united but one and the same. Of the fact that this happens we find clear evidence in nature, and externally in fire. When fire is at work kindling and burning up the wood the heat reduces it to something unlike wood. It robs the wood of its solidity, of cold and mass and moisture, and turns it more and more into what it is itself. But neither wood nor fire is appeased and quieted by any temperature or heat or likeness till fire, being gotten in the wood gives it its own nature as well as its own being, and it is all one fire, the same without distinction, neither more nor less. Before this happens there is always a reeking, crackling, fighting : strife between the fire and the wood. But as soon as the unlikeness is all destroyed and gone the fire dies down and the wood is mute. (So much for the overt action of a natural force.) Further I say it is a fact that the hidden power of nature hates any covert likeness so far as this connotes difference and division ; it seeks therein the *same*, loving that in it and it for that alone ; just as the palate seeks to relish in the wine its savour, its aroma. If water had as good a taste as wine the lips would care for wine no more than water.

I argue then that the soul hates her likeness, she has no love of likeness in and for itself, she loves it for *the same* which is concealed therein and which is the true father, beginningless and endless of everything in heaven and earth. And that is why I say that as long as likeness shows, is still to be found between and the fire and the wood, there is no true peace or pleasure there, no rest, no satisfaction. Philosophers teach that fire thrives by conflict, movement, change, in time. But the birth of fire, of desire, is independent of both time and distance. Love, enjoyment, no one finds tedious or remote. All this is summed up in the saying of our Lord, 'A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow and pain, but as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish.' God bids us in the gospel to ask the heavenly Father that our joy may be full. And in the same sense Philip says,

'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' For 'Father' means one (same): in him likeness vanishes and everything is stilled that has desire and mode.

Now we can see quite clearly the why and wherefore of a man's disconsolation in pain, adversity, and loss. It comes wholly and solely from his being turned outwards and away from God and not empty and free from creature: from being unlike God and cold in divine love.

There is another thing which anyone who knows and takes to heart will draw great comfort from in case of outward loss and pain and trouble. Suppose a man embarks upon a certain course, starts this work or gives up that, and then some accident befalls, he breaks his arm or leg perhaps, loses an eye or falls ill. If he keeps on saying to himself, hadst thou pursued a different course or done otherwise this would never have occurred, he will remain disconsolate and is bound to suffer. But if he argues with himself, hadst thou taken any other step, done or forborne to do some other thing, a much worse fate might have been thine, he will soon take heart and feel more cheerful.

Again. Say thou hast lost a thousand marks. Lament not for the thousand marks which thou hast lost, thank God for giving thee the thousand marks to lose, and let them go with a good grace. Thus thou dost exercise thy patience and make thee ready for eternal life—a chance not given to one man in a thousand. And here is yet another comforting reflection. A man who has been prosperous and then falls on evil days will do well to take counsel with himself and give thanks to God what time he is feeling his reverses, for then and only then he will realize his previous good fortune. Let him give God thanks for prosperity enjoyed so many years, and not complain.

Let him remind himself that man does in fact get nothing from himself but naughtiness and imperfection. The good things God has lent, not given him. Anyone who knows the truth will see that God the heavenly Father gives the whole of

what is good to his Son and to the Holy Ghost. No good thing does he give to creatures, he lends it them on trust. To the air the sun gives heat, but the light is loaned. When the sun sets the air loses its light but still remains warm, since the heat is given it for its own, and that is why theologians say the heavenly Father-God is the Son's Father, not his Lord, nor the Holy Ghost's Lord. God-Father, Son and Holy Ghost are Lord, the Lord of creatures. And we say that God was and is eternal Father, but as creating creatures he is Lord. So I argue in this way. If it is the case that every good and comfortable thing is lent a man on credit what right has he to grumble if God likes to take it back? Rather should he give God thanks for letting him have it for so long. Withal he ought to thank him for not recalling everything he loaned, for it would be no more than just for God to take away again everything he lent from one who waxes wrath when he withdraws a fraction of what was never his and of which he never was the master. Well says Jeremiah, in the throes of pain and lamentation, 'O how great and manifold are God's mercies that we be not utterly destroyed.' Supposing someone lent me his coat, his kersey, and his cloak, and then took back the cloak, leaving me in the frost the coat and kersey, I should thank him heartily and be well pleased. So remember, we are guilty of a monstrous wrong, that man and I who resent and make a grievance of the loss of anything, for by claiming that the good things I possess are given me, not lent, I am setting myself up to be the Lord, pretending to be God's natural Son and perfect who am not as yet even God's Son by grace, seeing it belongs to the Son and Holy Ghost to be invariably the same.

Further, we must remember that natural human virtues are beyond all doubt of great nobility and power; no outward work is too much for them nor big enough indeed to provide them with full scope or adequate expression. But there is an inner work not limited, not touched by time and place, and in this same there is what is God and divine and the image

of God who is not confined by time or place. It is present alike everywhere and always and is in this too more like God, for no creature can perfectly receive or reflect God's goodness. It must therefore be something more deep-seated, more exalted, some measureless, modeless,uncreated thing which the heavenly Father is perfectly poured forth, reproduced and manifested in ; to wit, the Son and Holy Ghost.

This interior work of virtue is no more to be hindered than God is to be hindered. Day and night this work lightens and shines. This work glorifies God, singing his praises and a new song. David says, ' Sing unto the Lord a new song, his glory is from the ends of the world.' That work does not make for God, that outward one which is confined to time and place, which is narrow and subject to hindrance and constraint, which tires and grows old with time and use. The (inner) work is loving God, intending good and goodness to such purpose that any good the man intends wholeheartedly to do he has already done and in this too he is like God. David says of him that all his intentions are accomplished.

We have in a stone a good example of this teaching. Its outward work consists in falling down and lying on the ground. This work may be hindered. It is not falling all the time nor without interruption. But there is another work less obvious in the stone, a constant tendency to fall, which being inherent in it none can interfere with, not God nor creature nor anyone at all. This work the stone is doing day and night without a break. It may lie perched up for a thousand years, but its tendency to fall will be no greater and no less than it was on the first day. Even so I say of virtue that she has an inner work : a will and tendency towards good of every kind coupled with repugnance to and avoidance of all things bad and evil and incompatible with God and goodness. And the worse an act is and the less godly the stronger the repugnance, and the better the act is and the more godly the easier and pleasanter and more welcome does she find it, her sole lament in times of tribulation is that her sufferings for God are over light, that

outward works in time are on too small a scale for the full expression and realization of herself. By effort she grows stronger and by giving she grows richer. She would not she had suffered and had got past pain and suffering: she is willing and anxious to be always suffering without stopping, for love of God and goodness. All her happiness consists in suffering for God's sake, not in having suffered. Our Lord says, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.' He does not say, 'those who have suffered.' Such an one hates having suffered, for having suffered is not suffering, which he loves, it is something past and done with, a privation of suffering for God which is all that matters to him. Similarly I maintain that a person of this kind hates also future suffering, which is not suffering either. But to have to suffer he does not hate so much as having suffered, for having suffered is nothing like the same as suffering—far from it, seeing it is done, whereas prospective suffering is not without its sting and that is what he prizes.

St Paul declares that he would choose to be accursed from God if it were for the enhancement and furtherance of God's glory. They say these words were spoken by St Paul while he was not yet perfect. But I ween this was the utterance of a perfect heart. They say too that he meant he would choose to be disjoined from God only for a time. My answer to this is that a perfect soul would be as loath to leave, to be away from God for a single hour as for a thousand years, and would hate it just as much. But if it were God's will and to his glory that he should be bereft of God then a thousand years would be no worse than a day, a single hour.

The inner work is godly too, divine, endowed with all the character of God, in this respect, that just as God plus creatures —though there were a thousand worlds—is not one hair's-breadth more than God is by himself, so this man's outward works, as I maintain and have said before, do neither by their length or breadth, their number or their size, add to the value of this inner work at all: the value of it lies in its own self, and

the outer work never can be small if the inner one is great, neither can the outer work be great or good where the inner one is weak or nil. With him who has the inner work going on within him all the time, any greatness, length or breadth of the interior work, is drawn, is gotten nowhere else than from God and in God's heart. God owns him Son who is born Son in the heavenly Father's womb.

With the outward work it is not so: this gets its godliness through the channel of the inner work, produced, poured forth in a descent of Godhead, the Godhead garbed in motley, in variety and part, all which and the likes thereof, likeness its very self, is foreign to and very far from God. These go with, cleave to, rest in that which is good, which is creature, blind altogether to goodness and light in itself, to *the one* wherein God bears his only Son and in him all who are God's children and born sons. There is the fount and origin of the Holy Ghost by whom alone, as being God's Spirit, one spirit (with) God himself, the Son is gotten into us and it is the exhalation of all who are God's sons so far as they are born of God alone in the image of God and in God transformed and estranged from multiplicity of which, however, some may still be found in the most exalted angel's nature.

Further, he who aims at actual gnosis will fight shy of goodness, of truth, of anything which even in thought or name has the least suggestion, the slightest shade of difference, and will pin his faith to the one devoid of any sort of number or variety, the one wherein is lost, is blotted out, every property and all distinctions, which are there the same: the same are Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This is *the one* which makes us blest, and the further we are from this one the less do we be Son or sons and the more imperfectly does the Holy Ghost arise in us and issue from us. And the more we approximate to the one the more really are we God's Son, his sons, and there proceeds from us God the Holy Spirit. This explains the saying of our God's Son in his divinity, 'Whoso drinketh of the water that I give, in him there shall arise a fount, a well of water springing

up to everlasting life.' And St John says he was speaking of the Holy Ghost.

The Son in the Godhead, properly (personally) speaking, connotes nothing but sonship (filiation), God-begottenness, fount and origin and outflow of the Holy Spirit, of the love of God; full true and perfect savour of the one, of the heavenly Father. Thus the heavenly Father's voice speaks from heaven to his Son, 'Thou art my belovèd Son, in whom I am beloved and at home, in whom I am well pleased.'

It is certain that no one who is not God's Son can love God properly and perfectly, for love the Holy Ghost arises in and issues from the Son and the Son loves the Father in himself and himself in the Father. As our Lord so truly says, 'Blessèd are the poor in spirit,' meaning those who have none of their own human spirit and naked come to God. And St Paul says, 'God has revealed it to us in his spirit.'

According to St Augustine, he best of all will hear and understand the scriptures who, all unshackled by the mind, seeks for the truth of scripture in itself: in the same spirit wherein it is written and spoken, namely, the Holy Spirit. St Peter says, 'All holy men have spoken in the Holy Ghost.' It is written by St Paul that 'no man knoweth the things of a man save the mind of man which is in him, and no man knoweth the things of God but the divine mind and God.' This is well put in a gloss which reads, 'No one can understand or teach the Pauline writings unless he be of the same mind in which Paul spoke and wrote.' I constantly lament the fact that unenlightened people who are wanting in the mind of God and have not as yet turned to it the benighted human mind should pretend to judge of things they hear or read about in holy writ, forgetting how it is set down that with men things are impossible which with God are possible, not to say usual and natural. The impossibles of the lower nature are the commonplaces of the higher.

And here let me remind you how I said that the good man, God's son born into God, will love God for his own sake, in himself, and many earlier words of mine to the effect that the

good man born of goodness and in God takes on all the character of deity. Now Solomon says it is the mark of deity that everything is wrought by God on his own account, or, in other words, God pays no heed to things outside himself, only to himself, loving and doing all things for himself. So if a man values himself and all he does, not for the sake of honour or reward or pleasure but solely for God and for God's glory, that is a sign he is God's Son.

And again, God loves for his own sake, works for his own sake alone, that is to say, he loves for love's sake and works for the sake of the work; for God would never, surely, have begotten in eternity his only Son if born meant never being born. Accordingly holy men declare the Son is born eternally in the sense that he is ever being born. And God would never have made the world if creation meant not being created, but God has in suchwise created the world that he is still creating it incessantly. Things past as well as future are all of them alien and remote from God.

Whoso is born of God God's Son will love God for his own sake, will love God for the love of God and do his work for love of work, for love of God, tireless in working as in loving, and it is all the same to him what he is loving. Which shows the love is God and that, as I was saying, the good man wants to be suffering all the while, not to have suffered. Suffering he has, (the suffering) that he loves: suffering for God and suffering (bearing) God, wherefor and wherein he is God's Son, of the nature of God and formed in the image of God. He loves for his own sake, that is to say, he is loving for love's sake, working for work's sake, for the same reason that God is loving and working, without ceasing: divine activity is his nature, his being, his life, and his felicity. So verily the God's Son, the good man, in so far as he is God's Son, will suffer for God and work for God, since that is his being, his life, his function, his delight. Of such our Lord declares, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.'

Further, in the third place, I declare that the good man so

far as he is good behaves the same as God not only in loving all he loves and doing all he does on account of God whom he loves therein and for whom he works, but in loving too and working for himself, the lover; for what he loves is God-Father and unborn; the lover is God-Son and born. But the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, Father and Son being one in the Holy Ghost. As to how the deepest and the highest of the soul God's Son draws and takes in to become God's Son in his heavenly Father's heart, that is to be found in the last part of this book, on *The Nobleman.*

It must be remembered that in nature the inrush, the flow of a higher nature into anything is always fraught with pleasure and is pleasanter than the nature of the thing itself. Water runs by nature down into the valley, that is its proper habit. But under the pull, the influence, of the moon up yonder in the sky it will so far forget and belie its proper nature as to flow uphill and up more readily than down.

The moral of this is that the proper thing to do, the obvious and happy course, is to resign one's natural will, to let go of and make good one's escape from self in all the suffering God sends. This may well explain the saying of our Lord, 'Whosoever will come to me let him deny himself and raise up his cross': shift, discard, that is to say, all that is to him a cross, a pain; for it is quite certain that anyone who is rid of self, who is perfectly resigned, will have no cross, no pains, no suffering: everything is bliss to him, joy and heart's content. He would indeed be coming to, following after God, for nothing makes God sad or sorry and no more can anything make this man sad or sorry. So this saying of our Lord is no mere exhortation in the ordinary sense, it is a promise, a divine prescription for making a man's doings and his sufferings, his whole life joyous and delightful, an offer of reward more than a command. Such an one will have what he desires and desire nothing evil, and that, after all, is what blessedness means. As our Lord truly says, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.'

Again, our Lord's words, 'Let him deny himself and lift up his cross and come unto me,' mean, so that he may become Son as I am Son by birth. God is the same one that I am, that I inhale in essence while abiding within in the Father's heart. 'Father, I will that my follower, he who comes to me, shall be where I am,' says the Son. No one really comes to the Son, as he is Son, but he who comes to be the Son, and no one is where the Son is but he who is in the Father's heart, one in the same, where the Son is.

'I,' says the Father, 'will lead her into the wilderness and will speak to her heart.' Heart to heart, one in the same does God love, everything other and different God hates. God gathers up, draws up to one, one is what all creatures seek, even the basest of creatures are looking for one. That this is what the highest find on being caught up above nature and transformed: that they do find one, one in itself, perhaps provides the key to that saying of the Son, Jesus Christ in his divinity, 'Father, where I am there shall my servant be, he who follows, he who comes to me.'

There is also the comforting reflection that it is impossible for nature to rupture or to spoil or even to disturb unless for the betterment of the thing disturbed. Not content with just as good it always aims at better. No wise physician meddles with a man's bad finger, for fear of causing pain, unless he can make the finger better or by making some improvement in his general health do good to the whole man. If he can cure the man and his finger too he will do it gladly, but if not he will sacrifice the finger to benefit the man. For it is much better to lose a single finger and preserve the man than to let both man and finger perish. Better one loss than two, especially where one is much more serious than the other.

Besides, we must remember that a finger or a hand, any human limb, is of far more value to the man whose limb it is than to itself, and it will blithely and without a qualm sacrifice itself for the man at need. I say it is no doubt the fact that a limb has no feeling whatever for itself but only on account

of, as a part of, that of which it is a member. And it stands to reason that the natural and proper thing for us is not to love ourselves at all except as God and in God. Then it would all be easy and delightful whatever God requires of and in us; especially if we understand and feel quite sure that God would allow immeasurably less dis-ease and wrong did he not know of and intend much better things therein. Failing to trust God for this it is but just, I do declare, that we should have suffering and discomfort.

There is yet another comfort. According to St Paul God chastens those he loves and accepts as sons. Sonship involves suffering. God's Son in his eternity in the Godhead was incapable of suffering, so his heavenly Father sent him into time to be made man, so that he might suffer. If thou dost hope to be God's Son and yet not suffer thou art much mistaken. In the Book of Wisdom it is written that God tries and proves the righteous man as gold is tried by fire in the furnace. It is a mark of trust for king or prince to send a knight into the van of battle. I have seen one lord who sometimes when he chose a man for his household company would send him forth by night and then ride out himself to do battle with him, and it so befell on one occasion that he came nigh to death by the hand of him he was testing in this way, a henchman henceforth loved and valued.

We read how in the desert once upon a time St Anthony was sore beset by evil spirits, and when he emerged victorious from the fray our Lord appeared to him outwardly and much rejoicing. 'Alas, Lord,' cried the saint, 'but where wast thou just now in my so dire need?'—'I have been here,' our Lord replied, 'the same as I am now. I wanted to enjoy the sight of thy doughtiness.' The silver and gold may be pure, yet to fashion therefrom a cup for the king to drink out of it has to be fired much more than for another. Thus we are told of the apostles how they heartily rejoiced to be accounted worthy of bearing despisery and shame for God.

Again, God's Son by nature was graciously pleased to be

made man so that he might suffer for thy sake, whereas thou dost want to be God's Son, not man, so that thou needst not, canst not suffer whether for God's sake or thine own. If people only knew and would remember the enormous pleasure which God himself after his own fashion and all the angels as well as all God-conners and God-lovers really feel in the patience of a man, that alone, believe me, would be ample recompense for any pain or suffering borne for God. One does not hesitate to part with goods or endure discomfort to please a friend and show him friendship. And supposing that someone had a friend who was suffering for his sake, was in pain or trouble, surely it were only fair that he should keep him company to stay him with his presence and give him such comfort as he can. Our Lord says in the Psalter, speaking about the righteous man, that he is with him in his trouble. This will serve as the text for seven comfortable teachings.

First, as St Augustine says, patience in suffering for love of God is better, higher, nobler than suffering any involuntary loss, of outward goods for instance. God knows, there is none so rich, no lover of this world, but he would be ready and willing to bear cruel pain and hardship, and long drawn out at that, if it were going to make him ruler of the world.

In the second place, I take not only the words wherein God says he is with us in our trouble but also a passage which reads thus: If God is with me in my suffering what more or what else do I want? Of course I shall want nothing else, I shall want God only, if I am as I should be. St Augustine says, 'Most greedy and unwise is he who is not satisfied with God.' How should one be content with the gifts of God, external or internal, if one is not content with God himself? And elsewhere he exclaims, Lord, so thou deniest us thyself give us then another thee, for we desire none else.

In the Book of Wisdom it is written, 'With God, the eternal wisdom, all good things have come to me at once.' This means, according to one interpretation, that nothing is good nor can

be so which comes without God, and anything that comes with God is good, good simply by the fact that it does come with God. Leave out God and take from creatures, from the world, its being, which God gives, and the remainder is of no account, untoward, hateful, useless. Many other admirable meanings, too long to enter into here, are implicit in the statement that all good comes with God. Our Lord says, 'I am with a man in trouble.' On which St Bernard comments thus, 'Lord, if thou art with us in our suffering then let me suffer all the while that all the while thou mayst be with me, by me, that I may have thee all the time.'

Thirdly, I maintain that God's being with us in suffering means that he is actually suffering with us. Anyone who knows the truth will know that I am right. God is suffering with man, aye and after his own fashion incomparably more than the sufferer who suffers for his sake. Now what I say is this: If God himself elects to suffer then it is only right that I should suffer too, since my will ought by rights to jump with God's. Every day I pray, as God tells me to, 'Lord, thy will be done,' notwithstanding which if God wills suffering I grumble at the suffering, which is altogether wrong. It is safe to say, God so gladly suffers with and for us—provided we are suffering for God and God alone, that he suffers without suffering. The suffering is to him such bliss that the suffering gives no pain. And if we were as we ought to be our suffering would be not pain but joy and comfort.

In the fourth place I note that a friend to share the suffering with will surely ease the pain. But if I am consoled by human sympathy how much more by God's?

Fifthly, I would say: Granting I am ready to suffer with a person I am fond of and who is fond of me, then it stands to reason that I would gladly suffer too with God, who is suffering in this way, a victim to the love he feels for me.

Further and sixthly, I declare: If God pre-suffers what I suffer, and I am suffering through God, my suffering promptly turns to joy and comfort however great and manifold it be.

In the ordinary way, when anybody does a thing for someone else, the one he does it for lies nearer to his heart and the thing he does lies further off and touches not his heart except through him for whom he does it. The builder hewing wood and stone because he wants to build a house 'gainst summer's heat and winter's chill is thinking first and last about the house, excepting for the house he would never hew a single stone or do a hand's turn of the work. We often see a sick man when he drinks sweet wine complain it tastes so bitter, as of course it will: the wine has lost its sweetness outside in the bitter of his tongue before it can get in to where his soul would taste and appreciate the flavour. Infinitely more and more truly this applies to the man who is doing all he does for love of God. God is the middle and the end of this man's soul, so naught can touch his heart and soul unless it goes through God and through God's suavity, losing as lose it must its sour in his perfect sweetness ere it can move or even touch this human heart.

Philosophers tell us that the heavens underneath are all wrapped in flames, stopping any wind or rain or tempest or bad weather from coming near enough to affect them in the least: it is all consumed, spent with the fiery heat before it reaches heaven. Even so, I say that everything we do and undergo through God is sweetened in God's sweetness ere it can arrive at the heart of anyone doing and suffering through God alone. 'Through' God, we say, because the heart is reached only after passing through God's sweetness, only after sublimation in the fiery flames of divine affection which embrace the good man's heart on every side.—Now we plainly see how well in various ways a good man is always comforted in trouble, doing or suffering. One way if he is doing and suffering through God, another if he is in godly love. And he can tell whether he is doing all he does for love of God; for as surely as he finds himself in unalleviated suffering so surely his work was not for God alone. Neither, you see, surely, is he in godly love. King David says, 'With God there comes a fire, divine,

and burns up all his enemies, everything unlike him, round about,' grief namely and distress and bitterness.

Further, from the statement that God is with us in our suffering and is suffering with us comes a seventh cause of profoundest consolation, God's idiosyncrasy to wit, that of being one without the least admixture, even in thought, of something different; that what is in him is all God himself. And if this is true then I declare that everything the good man is suffering through God he is suffering in God, and in suffering my suffering in God, God is my suffering, my suffering God. How then should suffering trouble me if pain and suffering lose their sting? My suffering is in God: my suffering is God. Granting God is the truth then wherever I find truth there surely do I find my God the truth. And just in the same way where I find suffering solely through and in God there I find God my suffering. He who cannot see this let him blame his own blindness, not me or God's truth.

Fondly and supply then suffer through God, seeing it is something so full of profit and of bliss, even as our Lord declares, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.' How can the kind and loving God bear that his friends, good people, should not be always suffering without ceasing? If someone had a friend who was given the chance of suffering temporary hardship with great and lasting profit to himself, to his honour and well-being, and he tried to thwart him or would like to see him thwarted, we should say he was no friend, not to say unfriendly. This is why, most likely, God would on no account permit his friends, good people, ever to be free from suffering if they consented to it and bore it patiently. The whole benefit of outward suffering springs from, is the outcome of, good-will, as I have said.

It follows that whatever the good man is ready to go through, all he is longing to suffer for God's sake, those things in God's eyes he really suffers through God and in God. King David in the Psalms exclaims, 'I am ready for all scourges and my sorrow is continually before me.' St Jerome, again, says that

an empty vessel, one well wrought and fit for ordinary purposes, is already charged with all its possibilities albeit never actually used. And I too have explained above that a stone is no less heavy for lying on the ground, its weight all tells in falling and also as the tendency to fall. It was in this sense that I said just now, the righteous man has already done in heaven and in earth all that he has willed to do and therein he is like God.

We can see how benighted people are by the astonishment they generally show at sight of good souls suffering pain and hardship and by their readiness to put them down to secret sins. They lose no opportunity of saying, 'But I thought he was so virtuous, how comes he to be so much afflicted? He seemed to me a man of blameless character!' And of course if it were pain and hardship, only pain and hardship that they felt they would not be good or blameless. But granting they are good then far from being a curse and a misfortune their suffering is their greatest blessing and good fortune. God says, 'Blessèd are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.'

According to the Book of Wisdom the souls of the just are in the hand of God. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die, but they are in peace, in joy and bliss. St Paul, telling how many of the saints have suffered manifold and cruel pains, declares the world unworthy of them. And this dictum, rightly understood, has a threefold meaning. One is that the world is all unworthy of the presence of many a righteous man. Another and better explanation is that goodness is inconvenient and worthless to this world; it is of worth to God alone, so they (the saints) are of worth to God and God-worthy. A third sense and the one I am using it in here is this: the people who love this-worldly things are not worthy to bear pain, to suffer anguish for God's sake. As it is written that the apostles rejoiced to be accounted worthy of suffering reproach in the name of God.

Now enough of this discourse, but I want, in the third part of the book, to cite a number of examples showing how a

righteous man may and should find solace in his trouble, and it can be found not only in the sayings but also in the doings of the sages and the saints.

3

In the Book of Kings we find that a man cursed King David and offered him gross insult. Thereupon a friend of David's swore that he would slay the scurvy hound. 'No, no,' said the King, 'let no one do him any harm; most likely God intends the insult for my good.'

And in the Book of Patriarchs we read of someone lamenting to a holy father that he was in trouble. The father said, 'Wouldst have me pray to God, my son, to remove it from thee?'—'Nay, father,' quoth the other, 'it is good for me, I know that right well; do thou ask God to give me grace to bear it patiently.'

One sick man who was asked why he did not pray to God to make him sound explained he was unwilling to and for three reasons. One was, because he felt quite sure God never would permit him to be ill unless that were the best thing for him. Another reason was: if a man is good he wants to do God's will and not God to do his, which would be all wrong. So if he please that I be sick it is not for me to desire to be well. Doubtless were it possible for God against his will to make me well the cure would be a worthless and sorry one for me. Willingness to suffer comes from love, refusal from the want of it. It is a far dearer, better thing for me and one which profits me much more that God should love me sick than that he should love me not and my body sound. God's loving is aught, what God loves not is naught.

It says in the Book of Wisdom, and there is truth in it, that whatever God wills, by the very fact of God's willing it, is good. Humanly speaking, I would certainly much rather have someone rich and powerful, a king for instance, like me and leave me giftless for the nonce than that he should dislike me and make me a present on the spot, always providing that love was

the motive for not giving then and there: that he refrained from giving out of hand the better and more richly to endow me later on. Again, suppose this person who is fond of me but for the moment gives me nothing, has no idea as yet of making me a gift but presently most likely will think better of it and bestow on me some boon; it will behove me to wait patiently, especially as all his gracious gifts are undeserved. And surely, with one whose love I flout, whose will my will runs counter to, all desire for his gifts apart, it is only meet that he should give me nothing and hate me and leave me to my fate.

The third reason why it would be unworthy and despicable of me to call on God to make me well is that I do not choose, nor is it right, to ask the bounteous, kind, and generous God for so small a thing. Suppose I journeyed to the Pope a hundred leagues or two, and when I got there said to him, 'Sir, holy father, I come a full two hundred leagues of toilsome road at heavy cost and I beseech you grant me that for which I came: give me a bean!' Forsooth, himself and all who heard of it would write me down, and justly, as an arrant fool. I do but state what is indeed the fact, that creatures, generally speaking, are of less value than a bean, compared with God. So it will go against the grain with me, if I am a wise and virtuous man, to pray to be made well.

And here too let me say that it is a sign of infirmity of mind to be either glad or sorry about the things of this passing world. We ought to be heartily ashamed to be found guilty of it in the sight of God and of his angels and in the eyes of men. One is quick enough to blush for any blemish on one's face that can be seen by outward eyes. But why say more? The books of the Old Testament as well as of the New, those of the saints and of the heathen too abound in instances of pious souls who through love of God and eke through natural virtue have given their lives and willingly sacrificed themselves.

One of the heathen, Socrates, declares that by virtues things

impossible are made not only possible but easy and pleasant as well. Nor would I forget that devoted woman in the Book of Machabees who upon a day did see most harrowing things, inhuman in their cruelty, done to her seven sons before her eyes, while she looked on rejoicing, sustaining them with fervent exhortations not to be afraid but give up soul and body willingly for God and right.

Two more points and I have done. One of them is this. Any proper godly man should surely be profoundly galled and heartily ashamed for hardship to upset him, seeing how for a coin or two any pedlar faces far and foreign lands, rough roads, oceans, deserts, murder and robbery of body and of goods, cruel want of food and drink, of sleep and other comforts, all of which he is ready to forget in view of very small and uncertain profit. The knight in combat stakes his all, body and soul, for perishable things, a fleeting triumph, whereas it seems so much to us a little suffering for God to gain eternal happiness.

The other thing I want to tell you is that many unenlightened people will be sure to say a number of the statements are not true that I have set down in this book besides elsewhere. My answer to them lies in St Augustine's words, from the first book of his *Confessions*. He says all future things for thousands upon thousands of the years to come (if the world last so long) God has already made and all past things for many thousand years he is still making fresh to-day. How can I help it if this is not always understood ? And in another place he says that to try and blind others to dissemble one's own blindness is nothing but pandering to self-love.—Enough for me that in myself and God what I say and write is true. To see a lance pole in the water anyone would think the shaft was bent although it is quite straight ; it is due to the water being denser than the air. The shaft is really straight, not crooked, in itself, and also in his eyes who sees it simply in the air alone.

St Augustine says : He who, free from all kinds of thoughts,

all kinds of sense impressions and ideas, inwardly perceives things not conveyed to him by any outward sight, he knows that it is true. But one who lacks this certainty will laugh and jeer at me and I pity him. Some, again, are anxious to behold and experience eternal things, divine activities, and stand in the eternal light while yet their heart is on the wing in to-day and yesterday, in time and place.

Seneca, the heathen doctor, says, great and lofty matters ought to be discussed by great and lofty minds and exalted souls. And it will be said, no doubt, that teaching of this kind, whether in writing or by word of mouth, ought not to be given to the profane. My answer to this is: If the ignorant were not taught they would never learn, so none would ever know the art of living and of dying. The ignorant are taught in the hope of changing them from ignorant to enlightened men. If there were no new there would be no old. 'They that are whole have no need of a physician,' says our Lord. The physician is there to make the sick ones sound. But supposing anyone mistakes his words, how can he help it who rightly teaches the right doctrine? St John proclaims his blessed tidings to all believers and unbelievers too, so that they may believe, yet he begins his Gospel with the highest that anyone on earth can say of God and his words, to say nothing of our Lord's, are always being misconstrued.

May the kind and loving God who is the truth itself vouchsafe that I and all who read this book may grow aware of truth in us.

PART II

THE NOBLEMAN[1]

Our Lord says in the Gospel: 'A certain nobleman went out into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and returned.' In these words our Lord teaches us how noble man is by nature

[1] See also Büttner, ii, No. 3, for a very free modern German translation, greatly abridged.

and how divine is that to which he may attain by grace. In these words too we have the theme of the major part of holy scripture.

To start with you must know and it is manifest that man has in him two natures: body and spirit. Hence it has been said: He who knows himself will know all creatures, for creatures are all either body or spirit. Accordingly the scriptures say of human beings that there is in us one man outwardly and another man within. To the outward man belong the dependents of the soul which are concerned and entangled with the flesh, which have a work in common with the organs of the body, the eye for instance, or the ear, the tongue, the hand and so forth. The scriptures call all this the old man, the earthly man, the outward man, the enemy, the servant.

The other man, within us, is the inner man. The scriptures call him the new man, the heavenly man, the young man, the friend, the nobleman. It is of him that our Lord says, 'A nobleman went out into a far country.'

Further, you must know that St Gregory says, and so with one accord do all the doctors, that every man by the very fact of his being a man has a good genius, an angel, and a bad genius, a devil. The good angel counsels and tends without ceasing to good, to things godly, things virtuous and heavenly and eternal. The bad genius counsels and tends all the while to things temporal, impermanent, vicious, devilish, and evil. This same evil genius is for ever parleying with the outward man, and through him succeeds in covertly getting at the inner man—just as the serpent became friendly with the woman Eve and through her with her husband Adam. Adam is the inner man, the man in the soul. He is the good tree of which our Lord said that it always brought forth good fruit. He is also the field wherein God has sowed his image and likeness and is sowing good seed, the root of all wisdom, all knowledge, all virtue, all goodness, seed of divine nature. This seed is God's Son, God's Word.

The outward man is the enemy, the wicked man who sows

tares on the field. Of him St Paul says: 'I find within me hindrance and opposition to God's command and counsel': to what God has said and keeps on saying in the ground and summit of my soul. Elsewhere he cries, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of my mortal flesh?' And in another place he speaks of man's spirit and his flesh always warring with each other. Flesh counselling vice and evil, spirit counselling love of God, peace, joy, and every virtue. He who is obedient and lives according to the spirit, to its teaching, to him belongs eternal life. He who is obedient to the flesh shall die. It is the inner man, the one of whom our Lord declares that he is the good tree, which always bears good fruit and never evil, for he wants goodness, is inclined to goodness, to goodness in itself all unconcerned with this and that. The outer man is the bad tree which can never bear good fruit.

As to the nobility of the inner spiritual man and the baseness of the carnal man the heathen philosophers Tullius and Seneca maintain that there is no rational soul without God, the seed of God exists in us. Given a hard worker and a good director it thrives apace and grows up into God whose seed it is and its fruit is likewise God's nature. Pear seed grows up into pear tree, nut seed grows up into nut tree: God seed into God, to God.[1] But if the good seed has a lazy worker and an incompetent director then weeds spring up and strangle that good seed and by shutting out the light prevent it growing. And yet, says Origen, a great authority, 'Since God himself has sown, dropped in and gotten into us this seed, therefore it may be covered up and lost to view, but it can never be destroyed or die out in itself: it glows and sparkles, lightens and burns, always making for God.

In the first stage the inner or new man, St Augustine says, follows in the footsteps of good, pious people. He is still an infant at his mother's breast.

[1] This is one of the hundred 'errors' for which Eckhart was excommunicated by the Inquisition. See No. 14: *Idem est quod dicitur quod homo possit fieri deus.*

In the second stage he no longer follows blindly the example even of good people. He goes in hot pursuit of sound instruction, godly counsel, holy wisdom. He turns his back on man and his face to God : leaving his mother's lap he smiles to his heavenly Father.

In the third stage he parts more and more from his mother, draws further and further away from her breast. He flees care and casts away fear. Though he might with impunity treat everyone with harshness and injustice he would find no satisfaction in it, for in his love to God he is so much engaged with him, so much occupied with him in doing good : God has established him so firmly in joy, in holiness and love that everything unlike and foreign to God seems to him unworthy and repugnant.

In the fourth state he more and more grows and is rooted in love, in God. He is ever ready to welcome any struggle, any trial, adversity or suffering, and that willingly, gladly, joyfully.

In the fifth stage he is at peace, enjoying the fullness of supreme ineffable wisdom.

In the sixth stage he is de-formed and transformed by God's eternal nature. He has come to full perfection and, oblivious of impermanent things and temporal life, is drawn, transported, into the image of God and become a child of God. There is no further and no higher stage. It is eternal rest and bliss. The end of the inner and new man is eternal life.

As to this inner noble man in whom God's form is stamped, God's seed is sown, how this seed and exemplar of God's nature and God's essence, God's Son, appears, and one grows aware of him, and how he sometimes disappears, to this Origen, that great authority, suggests a parallel : that God's Son, God's image, is in the ground of the soul like a living spring. If earth is thrown on it, earthly desire that is, it smothers it, covers it over, and it vanishes from our ken. But it in itself remains alive, and on removing the soil that was thrown on from without we see it again. He notes how this truth is set forth in the First Book of Moses, where we read that Abraham had digged wells

in his field and that evil-doers had filled them with earth and when the earth was thrown out the living stream re-appeared.

To use another simile: the sun is always shining, but when there is a cloud or mist between us and the sun we do not see its brightness, nor when the eyes are diseased or blind can they see its light. I sometimes use this illustration. When the artist makes a statue out of wood or stone he does not put the image in the wood, he chips away the wood which hides the form. He gives the wood nothing, he takes it away: carves it out where too thick, pares off overlay, and then there appears what was hidden. This is the treasure hid in a field, of which our Lords tells in the Gospel.

St Augustine says that when the human soul is all up-turned into eternity, into God and God alone, that then God's image lightens and shines; but when the soul faces outwards, even in good outward works, then the image is veiled. That is what is meant by the women's heads being covered while the men's are bare, in St Paul's teaching. And in all downward turning of the soul what it is turning to means the same thing: a covering, a head cloth. But the up-turned face of the soul is God's bare form, God's birth, naked, unveiled in the naked soul of the noble man as God's image, God's Son, seed of divine nature in us which never dies out though haply covered over. As David says in the Psalms, though suffering and sorrow are man's portion yet shall he abide in the image of God and that image in him. The true light shines in the darkness, but we are not aware of it.

In the Book of Love it is written: Look not upon me because I am brown, for I am shapely and beautiful, only the sun hath altered my colour. The sun is the light of this world, so it means that the highest and best things created or made will dim and discolour the divine image in us. Solomon says, remove the dross from the silver and there shines forth that purest of vessels, the image of God in the soul.

This too is what our Lord meant when he said, 'a nobleman went out.' For man has to go out of all forms and of himself,

and to all such he must be wholly foreign and remote if he really means and is to be a son: to become the Son in his Father's heart. Means of all kinds are alien to God.

God says, 'I am the first and the last.' No difference exists either in the nature of God or in the Persons so far as they are one in nature. The divine nature is one and each of the Persons also is one, the same one as their nature. Distinction in being and existence is taken as *same* and is one. Where it is not in (God) it takes on and has and shows difference. In one God is found, so to find God a man must be one. Our Lord says: 'A man went out.' In difference (separation) we find neither one nor reality, nor God nor rest nor bliss nor satisfaction. Be one, that thou mayst find God! And truly, wert thou really one thou wouldst stay one in separation, and separation would be one to thee, so nothing could stand in thy way. One remains equal to one in a thousand thousand stones just as much as it does in four stones, and a million is a simple number just as much as four.

A heathen philosopher says, 'The one is gotten of the supreme God. Its idiosyncrasy consists in being one with one. He deceives himself who seeks it under God.' And the same philosopher says too, and fourthly, that with nothing has this one a truer friendship than with maidens, virgins, as St Paul says: 'I have espoused you chaste virgins to the one.' And so shall mankind be united together to the one, which is God and God only.

A man went forth, our Lord says. Man: The fundamental meaning of the Latin word for man is, according to one interpretation, a person who submits himself wholly to God, with all he is and all that is his; one who looks up to God disregarding his own which he knows is behind him, beneath him. This is perfect and genuine humility. He takes this name from the earth. I will say no more of this now. But this word also means —this word *man*—something superior to nature, above time, above temporal things, things smacking of time, place, or body. Further, this man has in one way got nothing in common with

naught, for he is not copied from this or from that nor is he like them, and he knows nothing of naught: there is no feeling, no sense, of naughtiness in him. He is quite free from naught. There is found in him only pure being, goodness and truth. A man of this sort is a noble man and none else. There is yet another way of explaining the term 'nobleman' which our Lord uses.

You must know that those who see God face to face see also creatures with him. Intuition is the light of the soul, and all men by nature desire this knowledge. No better thing exists. Intuition is good. Doctors declare that when we know creatures in themselves that is evening knowledge, and in this creatures are seen in all sorts of different forms. But when we know creatures in God that is called morning knowledge, and then creatures are seen all the same, free from form, deprived of all likeness, in the one: God himself. Such is the noble man of whom our Lord says: 'A nobleman went out.' Noble because he is one and also because he knows God and creatures in one. I will offer still another explanation of what is meant by a nobleman. I say:

When anyone—his soul, his spirit—is contemplating God then too he is aware and knows that he is seeing, he knows that he is knowing and seeing God. Now there are some who think, and it is quite credible, that the kernel, the flower of felicity, consists in knowing, in the spirit knowing that it is knowing God. For though I had all bliss yet if I knew it not what help, what good, would it be to me? But I, of course, would not subscribe to this. For granting that the soul would (not) be happy without it, nevertheless her happiness does not consist therein, for the first condition of bliss is the vision of God face to face: that is her life and her being; she draws all she is from the ground of God, all unwitting of knowing, unwitting of loving, not wotting of things at all. She is fast asleep in the essence of God, conscious only of being there and God. If she knows and knows that she knows and sees and loves God that involves sallying forth, going back to the first

in order of nature. To know oneself white is much more external than to be white.

Philosophers say it is one thing, the power whereby the eye sees and another whereby it knows that it sees. The first, its seeing, all depends on the colour not on the thing coloured. It is all one what is coloured, stone, wood, man, or angel: to have colour, that is the whole thing. Even so I say that the noble man is drawing, getting, his whole being, life and happiness out of God, in God and from God alone, not from knowing, seeing or loving God or anything of that kind. Our Lord said well, it is eternal life simply to know God the one true God, not: to know that one knows God. How should a man know himself God-knowing when he does not even know himself?—Surely though, a man does not know himself, he knows God alone and nothing else at all, when he goes to heaven and is happy in the root and ground of happiness.—But when the soul knows she knows God then she knows God and herself as well. As I was saying just now it is one thing, the power whereby a man sees and another the power whereby he knows and is aware that he sees. As a matter of fact, now, here in us, the power whereby we see and know that we see is nobler and higher than the power by which we see, for nature begins its work with the weakest, but God starts his work with the strongest, most forward. Nature makes man from the child and the hen from the egg, but God makes the man before the child and the hen before the egg. God gives the Holy Ghost before he gives the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

My verdict then is this. Though man may know and realize that he is seeing and knowing God, his happiness does not depend on this, nor would God wish my happiness to lie therein. He who would have it otherwise must settle it with himself—I am sorry but I cannot help it. Heat of the fire and nature of fire are totally different things and poles apart in nature albeit near allied in time and place.

God's seeing and my seeing are poles apart and quite unlike each other. Well indeed may our Lord say a nobleman went

out into a far country to receive a kingdom, and returned. For man must be one in him(self), he must seek for that in himself and in one and 'receive' in one: see God and God only. And returning means (recognition): seeing and knowing that he sees and knows God.

All this the prophet Ezekiel has already said where he speaks of a great eagle with great wings, long-limbed, full of feathers and of variety, coming to the pure mountain and taking away the pith or marrow of the highest tree and cropping off the topmost branch which he brought down. What our Lord calls a nobleman Ezekiel describes as a great eagle. Who is nobler than he who is begotten half of the highest and best that creature has and the other half of the innermost ground of the divine nature, of its solitariness? In the prophet Hosea our Lord says: 'I will lead the noble souls into the desert and will speak to their hearts,' one to one, one from one, one in one and in one one eternally.

III

SERMONS

I

The soul is one with God and not united, so the scriptures say. For instance, if we fill a tub of water the water in the tub is united and not one: what is water is not wood and where it is wood it is not water. Now take the wood and throw it in the middle of the water, the wood is still united, nothing more, and not the same. It is different with the soul, she is one with God and not united: where God is there is the soul and where the soul is there is God.

Moses saw God face to face, so the scriptures say. This theologists deny. They argue in this way. Where two faces show God is not seen, for God is one not two. Who sees God sees nothing but one. Here I take the passage I gave in my first sermon, 'God is love, and he who is in love is in God and God in him.' Whoso is thus in love to him do I address the invitation [of St Paul], 'Faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy lord.' Here too I quote the saying of our Lord, 'Enter in faithful servant, I will set thee over all my goods.' This may be understood in three ways. First, 'I will set thee over all my goods': all my goods as divided up into creatures, over this dividedness will I set thee in one (*i.e.* in God). Next, taking them as all summed up to one, over this summation will I set thee, in unity. Thirdly, I will set thee in the oneness where all name is gone. There God is to the soul as though the reason of his being God was that he might be the soul's. For supposing God withheld aught of his being, of his is-ness, wherein he is to himself, so that God was greater than the soul by a hair's-breadth even, then he would not be God, so absolutely one is the soul with God. Witness the gospel-saying of our Lord, 'I pray thee Father as I and thou are one that they also may be one in us.' And those other words, also from the gospel,

in which our Lord declares, 'Where I am there shall also my servant be,' so throughly does the soul become the same being that God is, no less, and this is as true as God is God.—Dear children I beseech you realize what this means. I pray you for God's sake do it in love's name and carefully preserve this frame of mind. All such are in unity, as I have said, for they are free from form, and we durst not think that there is in form less chance of their departing from the unity. To do so would be wrong and might even be called heresy, for you must know that there, in the unity, there is no Conrad nor yet Henry. I will tell you how I think of people. I try to forget myself and everyone and merge myself for them in unity. May we abide in unity, So help us God. Amen.

II[1]

MARY AND MARTHA

St Luke relates in his Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ entered into a certain village where he was received by a woman named Martha, and she had a sister called Mary who sat at the feet of our Lord and listened to his words, but Martha moved about, waiting upon our Lord.

Three things made Mary sit at Christ's feet. One was the goodness of God possessing her soul. The second was deep, unspeakable longing : she desired she knew not why and wanted she knew not what. The third was sweet solace and joy in the eternal words proceeding from the mouth of Christ.

With Martha too there were three things which made her move about waiting upon our Lord. She was in her prime and had good grounds for thinking that no one else could do the work as well as she herself. Next, she was sensible enough to arrange her outward work as considerately as possible. The third thing was the great honour due to her dear guest.

Doctors declare that God is ready to satisfy the highest

[1] With emendations and some additions from Pfeiffer's text (I, ix). See also Büttner, ii, No. 4.

aspirations, rational and sensible, of every man. For God to give us satisfaction rationally speaking and also sensibly are two very different things to the friends of God. Sensible satisfaction means that God grants us comfort, joy, contentment, and much indulgence in these things is not good for the friends of God, for their interior life. But rational satisfaction is of a spiritual nature. As to rational satisfaction I hold that not by any inclination can the summit of the soul be brought so low as to be drowned in pleasures, rather it rebels vigorously against them. Man enjoys rational satisfaction only when creature weal and woe are powerless to affect the summit of the soul. By creature I mean anything we see or are aware of under God.

Martha says, 'Lord, tell her to help me.' This was not said in anger, it was affection that constrained her. It was said half in jest and half in earnest.—How so?—Well, she saw Mary possessed with a longing for soul-satisfaction. Martha knew Mary better than Mary knew Martha, for she had lived long and well, and life gives the best understanding. Life gauges light and delight better than anything else under God that man can have in this body and in some ways more surely than the eternal light can. Eternal light makes known oneself and God, not oneself apart from God. Where self is seen by itself it is easier to tell what is like or unlike. Paul makes this plain and so do the heathen philosophers. Paul saw in his ecstasy God and himself, in spirit, in God, but he was not in him properly, with an intimate knowledge of the virtues, because he had not practised them. By practising the virtues the masters gained profound discernment, a truer knowledge of the several virtues than had Paul or any saint in his first rapture.

So with Martha. Hence her words, 'Lord, tell her to help me.' As though to say, 'My sister thinks she can do as she likes, sitting comfortably at thy feet. Let her see if it be so. Bid her get up and go.' The latter part was kindly meant albeit she spoke her mind. Mary was filled with longing: longing she knew not why and wanting she knew not what. We have her suspected, dear Mary, of sitting there for her

own pleasure rather than for spiritual profit. 'Bid her rise,' Martha says, fearful lest by dallying with pleasure a stop should be put to all progress. Christ answered and said, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful, art troubled, with many things, one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the best part which shall never be taken away from her.' This Christ said to Martha not rebuking but answering her, soothing her, telling her Mary would become as she desired. Why did Christ say 'Martha, Martha,' naming her twice? Isidorus says there is no doubt that prior to the time when God was man he never called anyone by name lest any should be lost whom he did not name and about whom it was doubtful. Christ's calling I take to mean his eternal knowing: changeless, eternal subsistence, before the creation of creatures, in the Book of Light[1]: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Of those named therein and whose names Christ uttered in words, of those not one was ever lost. Moses, for instance, who was told by God himself, 'I have known thee by name,' and Nathanael unto whom Christ said, 'When thou wast lying under the leaves of the fig-tree I knew thee.' The fig-tree being God in whom his name was inscribed eternally. Thus it may be shown that there never was nor ever shall be lost a single soul whom Christ has ever named by human mouth in the eternal Word.

Why did he name Martha twice? He meant that every good thing, temporal and eternal, destined for creature, that all this was Martha's. The first 'Martha' stood for perfection in temporal works. The second one for her eternal weal: in all things pertaining to this her lacking nothing. He says, 'Thou art careful (troubled with many things): thou art among things, but they have no hold in thee.' The careful are those who let nothing hinder them in their work. Those who let nothing hinder them in their work are the ones who follow the lead of the eternal light. These are with things not in things. It is almost as though they were up yonder, on the circle (confines) of eternity and they are enjoying no less.

[1] Or *Life*, as in Pfeiffer.

Almost, I say, because creatures are all of them means. Means are twofold. One, without which I cannot get into God, is work, vocation or calling in time, which interferes not one whit with eternal salvation. (The other means is selflessness.) Work is the outward practice of good works, but calling implies the uses of discrimination. We are brought forth into time in order that our sensible worldly occupations may lead us nearer and make us liker to God. St Paul had this in mind when he spoke of 'redeeming the time' and of 'the days being evil.' 'Redeeming the time,' that means the continual ascent of the mind to God, not in imagination but a real intellectual adventure. And, 'the days are evil' may be explained as follows. Day presupposes night. If there were no night we should not speak of day. It would be all one light. This was Paul's idea: one life under the sun is all too short, subject as it is to spells of darkness which cloud and obscure the soul's eternal home. Hence too, Christ's exhortation, 'Work while ye have the light.' He who works in the light rises straight up to God without let or hindrance: his light is his calling, and his calling is his light. This was the case with Martha. Accordingly he says to her, 'One thing is needful not two.' What time we are encompassed by the eternal light thou and I are one: we two are one. Standing over all things and under God on the circle of eternity the fiery spirit is two, for it sees God not without means. Its knowing and being, or knowing and object of knowledge will never be one till it sees God (with nothing between). Then spirit is seen to be God, free from all forms.

Now mark what the circle of eternity means. The soul has three ways into God. One is, to seek God in all creatures, ardently longing and busily working in various ways. King David says, 'In all things have I sought rest.' The second way is a wayless way, free and yet bound, raised, rapt away wellnigh past self and all things, will-less, formless, there seems nothing left but sheer being. Christ makes reference to this when he says, 'Blessèd art thou Peter, flesh and blood have

not enlightened thee, but being wrought up into thy higher mind, in Him thou dost call me God: my heavenly Father hath revealed it to thee.' St Peter saw God, but not face to face. True, he was caught up in the heavenly Father's power past all created knowledge to the circle of eternity. Grasped by the heavenly Father—a dear embrace—in his tempestuous might he was carried up unknowing in an aspiration transcending all the things of sense. Then Peter heard within him sweet tones coming down from above, not conveyed by any mortal means, in simple truth (direct perception of) God's and man's at-one-ment in the Person of the heavenly Father-Son. I make bold to say, if Peter had seen God unveiled, in his own nature, as he did later on, like Paul when he was caught up into the third heaven, the most exalted angel's voice would have seemed harsh to him. He said many loving words which Jesus did not need who sees into the heart and ground of the soul where man stands face to face with God in the freedom of actual presence. St Paul alludes to this when he tells how he was caught up into God and heard ineffable things not lawful for man to utter. From this I gather that St Peter was standing on the circle of eternity and was not in unity beholding God in his his-ness.

The third way is called way, but is really home: seeing God face to face in his his-ness. Christ says, 'I am the way, the truth and the life': Christ Person, Christ Father, Christ Spirit, three—way, truth, and life—the one Christ, all in him. Out of this way creatures keep helplessly circling round. Into God, in this way, led by the light of his Word and compassed about by the love of them both, that beggars description. Hear and marvel! To be out and in, be conceived and conceive, see and be seen, save and be saved, that is the end: the spirit at rest in the one eternal nature.

But to return to our argument. Martha, and with her all the friends of God, are careful or troubled—not, in trouble—a state in which temporal work is as good as any communing with God, for it joins us as straitly to God as the best that

can happen to us barring the vision of God in his naked nature. ' Thou art troubled,' he says, meaning to say she was troubled, cumbered, with her lower powers, for she was not given to indulge in spiritual sweetness : she was not pleasure-seeking.

We need three things in our work : to be orderly, honest, and wise. To do the next thing, that I call orderly. By honest I mean doing one's best at the moment. To feel true and lively pleasure in good works, that I call wise. Where these three things are found they are just as good and unite us as closely to God as all Mary Magdalene's idle longings.

Christ says, ' Thou art troubled about many things, not about one.' When, perfectly simple and wholly unoccupied, she is transported to the circle of eternity, then the soul will be troubled if anything should intervene to spoil her joy in being up there. She will be anxious and distressed. But Martha being firmly established in virtue, open-minded, not hindered by things, wanted her sister to be like her, for she realized her insecurity. She had the highest motives, wishing her all that pertains to eternal felicity. Christ says, ' One thing is needful.' What is this one ? It is God. That is the need of all creatures. If God took back what is his all creatures would perish. Were God to withdraw from the soul at the point where her spirit is merged in the eternal Persons then Christ would be left merely creature. The one, truly, is needful. Martha feared that her sister would stay dallying with pleasure and sweetness, so Christ says in effect : All is well, Martha, she has chosen the best part ; this will pass. The best that can befall creature lies in store for her : she shall be blessed like thee.

Here let us examine the doctrine of virtue. Good life is in three ways a matter of will and primarily of resigning the will to God, for it is imperative to live up to one's lights, be it in taking or leaving. There are three kinds of will. The first is sensible will, the second is rational will, the third is eternal will. The sensible will needs guidance, proper teaching. The second is rational will : following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus and the saints, words, deeds and way of life all directed

towards the highest end. Given this much God will give something more in the ground of the soul, to wit, eternal will and the amiable counsels of the Holy Ghost. Says the soul, 'Lord tell me, what is thy eternal will?' and then if she has satisfied the above conditions and if God so please, the Father will speak his eternal Word into the soul.

Now according to our good people we have got to be so perfect that no joy can move us, we must be indifferent to weal and woe. They are wrong. I say, never was there saint so great but he could be moved. But on the other hand I hold that it is possible with a holy man even in this body that nothing can move him to turn aside from God. Do you think that as long as words can move to joy and sorrow you are imperfect? No. Christ was not. He proves it when he cries, 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death.' Words wounded Christ sorely. The collective woe of creatures falling upon one creature would not be so profound as Christ's woe was, owing to his exalted nature, to the blessed union of divine and human nature. By the same token I declare that no saint ever lived nor ever shall pain could not pain nor pleasure please. Now and then it happens in friendship and in love or by a miracle—on being called a heretic, for instance, or anything you will—that a person is suffused with grace and indifferent to praise or blame. And with religious (as I said just now), it may well come about that nothing whatever from outside can induce them to depart from God. Though the heart be wrung or all discomfited the will alone continues to abide in God, saying, 'Lord, I am thine and thou art mine.' Nothing that enters therein can lessen eternal well-being so long as it does not invade the summit of the mind up yonder where it is at one with the will of God.

Christ says, 'Thou art troubled with many things.' Martha was Martha really. Her occupation was no hindrance to her: work and calling, both, she turned to her eternal profit. She had drawbacks, it is true, but always there remained nobility of nature and unflagging industry besides her other virtues.

Mary was Martha before she was Mary. She was not yet Mary while she sat at the feet of our Lord. She was so in name, not in nature. She was filled with joy and longing, for the first time at school learning life. Martha was so really, and that is why she urged, ' Lord, bid her get up,' meaning to say, ' Lord, I do not like her sitting there just for the pleasure of it. I want her to learn life and really possess it. Tell her to rise and really be Mary.' She was not really Mary while she was sitting at Christ's feet. Mary I call a well-disciplined body obedient to wise counsels, and by obedient I mean, what discrimination dictates will abides by. Now our good people fondly think they can reach a point where sensible things are non-existent to the senses. They never will: that a disagreeable noise should be as grateful to the ear as the sweet tones of a lyre is a thing I shall never attain to. But this much we have a right to expect: when discrimination observes that with rational, formal will rests decision, and orders the will to be free, that the will should answer, ' I will.' Then lo and behold strife changes to peace, for what a man wins by hard work turns to heart's joy and then it is fruitful.

Again, some people hope to reach a point at which they are excused from works. I say this is impossible. Not till after the disciples had received the Holy Ghost did they begin to do good works. While Mary sat at the feet of our Lord and listened to his words, she was learning. She had just gone to school to learn life. But later on, when she had learnt her lesson and received the Holy Ghost, she began to serve. She journeyed overseas preaching and teaching and acting as servant and washerwoman to the disciples. Only when the saints are saints and not till then do they do meritorious works. Then they gather treasure of eternal life. What is done before is by way of reparation and repentance. Where do we find evidence for this? In Christ. From the very beginning when he was made man he was working for our eternal happiness, and he went on to the end, to his death upon the cross; not a member of his body but played its own particular part. May

we follow him faithfully in the path of true virtue. So help us God. Amen.

III [1]

Amor est fortis sicut et mors [2] . . . Love is strong as death, so reads the translation of the words I have quoted in Latin.

Now we note three things that death does to man, and these same three things are brought about as well by our Lord's love which is strong as death. The first effect a man's death has upon the man is to spoil him for and rob him of all perishable things. He can never possess them or enjoy them as before. Next he is deprived of any benefits his soul or body may derive from pious practices: from prayer or meditation, from the virtues, holy living and generally speaking from good things wherein a man finds spiritual comfort and happiness and joy. Never again can he make use of these like anyone on earth. The third thing man's death does to man is to put him beyond reach of any merit or reward that he might earn, seeing that after death no one can get a hair's-breadth nearer heaven than he was before.

These three things we must expect of death which is the parting of the soul and body. But the love of our Lord is as strong as death and it too kills, in a spiritual sense, parts man's soul divinely, in a way, from body. This is what happens when a man forswears himself altogether, abandons himself, rids himself of himself in the infinite power of the love which so right blissfully can kill. And love itself is called (love-sickness), a gentle illness and a living death, for this dying is a pouring in of eternal life and it ensures the personal life being profitably spent.

Now this same sweet death does these three things to man provided it is strong enough to kill and not just make him indisposed as many people are who sicken long before they die.

[1] In the margin is written in another hand: 'A fine sermon on divine love.' For a free modern German version, see Büttner, vol. ii, No. 8, which is taken apparently from the Basle *Tauler*.

[2] The end of the sentence is illegible.

Some are ill not very long; some die a sudden death. And similarly there are many souls who spend a long time fencing with themselves before they gain the upper hand and finally leave themselves for God. And very often when they do leave themselves to die they turn back to look for something good, something they really desire in itself and for itself, not only and solely for God's sake. Meanwhile they are not truly dead in love, not till all selfish interest is slain in them, even their personal interest in human life itself, which none is permitted to destroy but love which is strong as death. It is proof against all else.

Those who are in hell suffer so much pain because they desire only their own good, and unless they change they die the eternal death of selfish longing which is not dead in hell nor can it die since hell with all its evil cannot slay what sweet love with its passing goodness can. Love is not only strong as death, death which is human, but she is stronger than the death of hell: she can and will, alone, destroy the life of longing and self-seeking, and in her sweet death she does three things to man. First she detaches him from perishable things, from friends, possessions, honours, ordinary pleasures and from creatures generally. He possesses nothing, likes nothing for itself, nor will he of set purpose and aforethought use any of his members to further his own interests or enjoyment. For when dear love-death separates a man from what is fleeting, straightway his soul demands and turns to higher things, to prayer, to meditation, to the virtues, to austerities, to thinking about God. She occupies herself in pious practices and relishes them more than passing pleasures. By nature she likes these ever so much better than the others. For our Lord has so contrived the soul that she is never comfortless. To start with she falls upon perishable things with affection and delight. Then when sweet love-death severs her from these she is not left lamenting. She comes to relish spiritual goods and finds it worse to part with these than with the former ones. And some by experience know well that it is often far less hard to give up the whole

world than the solace sometimes found in prayer and meditation.

Now this sweet love-death is so strong that nothing can withstand it. To whom it really comes that man is helpless. So sweet love-death does to him what nothing else can do. In the second place, then, it effects two things: it makes the man give up himself and also shun all spiritual solace as abhorrent and accursed. Dear God, what but thy love could do this, could make a man leave thee for thy sake, reject thine for thine? What better gift, what worthier offering could one ever give thee than thyself to thyself? Yet, Lord, how rare it is for anyone to come with thee to give to thee. For mighty few have finished with all passing things. They still feel drawn to many things that are happening round them. And thus, Lord, it befalls that (they) neglect their spiritual weal for an hour's passing pleasure. Yet to have thee, God, an hour is better than all the worldly gain that ever was or ever could be from the first day to the last.

Then this sweet death: supposing a man mends his ways will these two things suffice him? No, not by any means. Death cannot kill. Its part is merely to break hearts and wrest away the living. As long as wanton death can outrage love a third requirement must be fulfilled. Love brings about this third condition: the man renounces his eternal life together with all benefits he might receive from God or from his gifts. Never will he willingly and of set purpose for himself or on his own behalf desire or seek or serve or live in hopes of eternal life or let it ease his travail.

Lord, most dear God, this malady is eased only by the disease of thy love which is strong as death, which kills the personal self of man and divorces his body from his soul. She will have nothing to do with the body or anything else, for herself. She says good-bye to the world and goes yonder to her reward. Ah Lord, love and bliss indeed does this soul deserve, and where if not in thee, delightful God, who art her life. Of this love may it be our lot to die. So help us God. Amen.

IV

SAINT JAMES' DAY

It is written in the gospel that Mary, James' and John's mother, besought Christ and said, Say that these my two sons shall sit one on thy right hand and one on thy left (in thy kingdom). Christ answered and said, 'Ye know not what ye ask. To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give to you but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.' He says, 'It is not mine to give to you,' and this may be taken in two ways. Humanly speaking it means that Christ in his human nature has not got the kingdom of God in his gift. For though the soul of Christ is so much akin to deity and no spirit in eternal life can apprehend what the soul of Christ has apprehended of the Godhead, it is not given to her in her creature nature.—Secondly, his words, 'it is not mine to give you,' may be understood of his divine nature. He says, it is mine but not (mine) to give you. Mine and not mine, that is very curious. Just as elsewhere in the gospel he says, my teaching is not mine: mine and not mine. It is strange, but it is true. He explains: it is not mine to give to you, it is his for whom my Father has prepared it. It is not mine to give you, but if you want to have it you can get it at the source where I am getting it. True, it is mine, for I am given it by the Father, but it is not mine to give to you. You must get it where I get it, at the fountain-head where I do myself, in the ground where the Father and I are one essential nature. In the emanation wherein I am ever proceeding from the Father, that is where you must get it. The Father is your Father as he is my Father, so I cannot give it you, nor is it mine to give. You can get it where I get it myself, in the ground where my Father is potent, to wit, in his primitive nature, and to be granted the kingdom there she (the soul) must be the very same Son who has been the Son of his divine Father eternally. The kingdom is not to be had except in the ground where the Father is the natural cause of the Son. It is

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forbidden to all but the Son of the Father in their same nature. So to gain it thou must be the Son of the Father himself. Christ says, 'It is mine, I have it from the Father, but it is not mine to give to you. You must get it where I get it, at the fountain-head whence I have flowed eternally,' but this you cannot do except there is gotten in you the Son who is ever proceeding from the source of your felicity. May we attain to this, So help us God. Amen.

V

INNOCENTS' DAY

St John saw a lamb standing upon Mt. Sion. It had its name and its Father's name written upon its forehead, and with it there were an hundred and forty-four thousand. He says they were all virgins, and they sang a wonderful song which none but they could sing and followed the lamb whithersoever it went. Theologians say that God has ordered creatures so that always one is higher than another, and that the highest rule the lowest and the lowest (are subject to) the highest. What sages tell in cryptic language others openly declare. They say the golden chain is the perfectly pure nature which is raised up into God and which is not sensible of anything outside him and which is conceiving God. Each one contacts the others, and the highest has its foot planted upon the lowest rung. Creatures do not contact God, not in their creature nature. That which is created has to be destroyed to liberate the good : the shell must be broken if the kernel, the goodness, is to get out. This all refers to interior growth, for an angel, except in this pure nature, knows no more than this wood, nay, an angel in this (his angelic) nature has no bigger stake in God than any fly.

He says, 'upon the mountain.' How does man arrive at this pure state ? They were virgins, those upon the mountain, true and faithful to the lamb and false to creatures, and they followed the lamb wherever it went. Some people will follow

the lamb as long as things go right with them, but they turn back when things go wrong. That is to say, they are not (virgins), for these, he declares, followed the lamb wherever it went. If thou art a virgin, true to the lamb and untrue to creatures, then thou art following the lamb whithersoever he goeth. Not so comes suffering from thy sins or from thyself. Then no test can break thee. They were upon (the mountain). That which is high does not suffer from what is below it, only from what is above it, higher than it is. A heathen philosopher says, While a man is with God it is impossible that he should suffer. The exalted soul who has lost faith in creatures and puts his trust in God does not suffer. If he did suffer it would touch God's honour.—They were on Mt. Sion. Sion stands for vision, Jerusalem for peace. As I was saying in the garden a little while ago, these two constrain God and having these he must be born in thee. I will tell you a story, half allegorical. Our Lord once went into a great crowd and a woman came and said, If I could touch the hem of his garment I should be healed. Then said our Lord, Someone has touched me. But, Sir, cried St Peter, a multitude of people throng thee and press thee and sayest thou, Who touched me ?

It has been said that we live on death. If I eat fowl or ox it has to be killed first. We ought not to be troubled on anyone's account, but to follow the lamb in sorrow as in joy. The apostles bore themselves alike in weal and woe, so everything they had to bear was sweet. Death to them was as sweet as life.

One of the heathen philosophers likens creatures to God. According to the scriptures we shall be like God. Like, that is bad and misleading. If I am like someone, if I find someone like me, that person behaves as though he were I, and he is not. Upon the scripture saying that we shall be like God a heathen master comments thus : He who attains to this in natural things God will no more allow to be his like than that he is God. Likeness falls short of sameness. In eternity it is *same*. Identity means *same*. Were I the same I were not like.

He says they had their name and their Father's name written on their foreheads. What is our name and what is our Father's name? Our name is *to-be-born* and the Father's name is *born*. (He is born) where the Godhead glimmers darkly in the first light-nature which is all innocent of light, as I was explaining in the garden. 'Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied,' said Philip, meaning first of all, that we shall be the Father, for the Father's name is *born*. He begets in me his like. When I see food I like that begets pleasure. Or seeing a person I like begets fondness. In just the same way the heavenly Father begets in me his like, and from this like springs love, to wit, the Holy Ghost. A father by nature gets a child. He who sponsors the child is not its father.

Boëthius says, God is the motionless good which is moving all things. God stopping sets everything going. So desirable a thing moving and driving starts all things running back whence they came, while it abides motionless in itself. And the nobler the thing the more steadily it runs. The deep drives it. Wisdom and goodness and truth contribute towards it. (The) One merely contributes the ground of being. He goes on to say, 'in their mouth is no lie.' While I keep hold of creatures and they have a hold on me there is a lie and (in) their mouth there is none found.

It is a sign of a good man to praise good people. When a good man praises me I am praised indeed, but if a bad man praises me I am shamed indeed, and if a bad man censures me I am really praised.—Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. It is ever the sign of a good man that he enjoys talking about God. People like to talk about the things that occupy their minds. The craftsman likes talking of his handicraft; the preacher likes talking about preaching; the godly man talks readily only about God. There is one power in the soul that I am fond of speaking of, and if the soul consisted entirely of that she would be uncreated and uncreaturely, but it is not so with the rest of her. She has a temporal aspect, a dependence upon time, and here she trenches upon creature. To this power

nothing is alien or remote. Things overseas a thousand miles or more are just as much within its ken as this place wherein I stand. This power is virgin, and follows the lamb wherever it goes. This power is ever face to face with God in his actual self. It is one in the oneness not one with its likeness. May this befall us, So help us God. Amen.

VI

Dear children, you must know that true spiritual life leads to perfect freedom from self and from all things. One cares nothing, seeks nothing, has nothing, wants nothing for oneself but frankly resigns oneself to the eternal law, always so clearly shown to the discerning but which none may know except he be inwardly atoned and outwardly obedient to the discipline perfectly exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who live this life, they verily attain to unity, and to know the truth one has to dwell in unity and be the unity. He who is at all aware of his own mind knows and conceives naught of God's. By the fact of his knowing and seeing he is not void. The highest knowing and seeing is knowing and seeing, unknowing, unseeing. To know aught of self is to know naught of God, and he who wants God to be his is putting an obstacle in his own way. 'He who wants God to be his is in danger of spiritual pride,' so says one of the saints. With the righteous soul, the more God is to her the less he is hers, for God is all his own. The right humble spirit is little in itself, because the way of truth is made known to it. True spiritual poverty leads into it. The soul will find no more profound humility than that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who himself declared, 'I am not of myself.'

VII

Boëthius cries, speaking of the real being of the Sovran Good, 'Rid thee and rise O thou most pure perception, to where all multitudinousness is reduced to one.' 'Rid thee,' that means, abandon propensities, even the least whereto thou hast given

consent. Rise over all this and cast thyself into the winged and towering power of the will, into the (summit of) the mind —peaceful, ever at rest, free from things—and therewith taking flight, vanish within the keep and shrine that holds the divine form. Swing thyself up to it, into the void, and in that nothingness sink down eternally. This is the private door which the soul has into divine nature.

VIII

FEAST OF THE SEVEN BRETHREN

Mater tua et fratres tui foris stant etc. (*Matt.* 12_{47}). 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee.' Praise the Lord, children, praise the name of the Lord who maketh the unfruitful to dwell in the house of God gladly and a mother of children. Blessed be the name of the Lord for this for ever. His answer comforts us in two ways. First, in his promise that we shall be God's mother. Secondly, that we shall be God's brothers. Take the first word, *Behold*, it suggests four things. As an interjection it expresses wonder that we should be God's mother and his brothers. Next, this word is indeclinable (unchangeable) as God's mother and his brothers have to be. Thirdly, this word *behold* has to do with seeking, and signifies that anyone who seeks to be God's mother or his brother must set all his thoughts and desires on the Word which is the eternal Father's Son. Fourthly, this *behold* is an adjunct or qualifying word laying stress upon the fact that in everything he does man's only end is the eternal Word : to be God's mother and his brothers. Whoever is so is a wonder, as King David says, ' God works wonders in his saints.' According to one authority the (highest) angel is in himself a breath, a wonder, but in relation to God and as compared with God he is a body, so it is amazing that we should be his mother and his brothers. In the Book of Love it tells how the angels marvel at the soul being in a body—in the desert, like a little rock-plant—and at her stooping to her love. They say, we want the soul to be God's mother and his brother. That is amazing,

ineffable. It has no name. It transcends time and place, a marvel that none can describe. Thus St John says of the wonderful light of the eternal Word, 'We beheld his glory, (the glory) as of the only-begotten of the Father.' On this St Chrysostom remarks, 'He was not able to describe it because it was miraculous and infinite. Just like someone,' he says, 'who has seen a king's majesty, untold magnificence, and then a man asks him, What is the king's majesty like? and he says, Like a king's.'

Now who is this that comes up in the desert like a root in (the clefts of) the rock? It is the tender rock-plant shooting up among the rocks, thrusting through the air, invisible meanwhile as the air itself. Or, in a figurative sense we take it that the man who wants to be God's mother must be wholly spiritual, above created things and oriented to their Lord. Hot things tend to rise, like wine which sits on the surface of the water. Wine being of a warmer nature its virtue rises through the water, and the water turns to wine which loses heat and what is lost to it ascends. Withal she (the soul) tends to ascend, what is given off from God entering into her, nor is she satisfied until through prayer it is hers by grace. 'Enter in.' She sinks into her ground, and 'in the beginning' (the Father) herself does all divine works.

Now I say it is a wonder that we should be God's mother and his brothers. We must be God's brothers, seeing we stepped out of the same exemplar, and taking each other by the hand shall presently step back and be made up again to one. What I say is that if we are to be God's mother and also the eternal Word as the Father bears it, then I shall have to be united with him, or, in other words, if I am to speak the self-same Word that God is speaking I must be made one with him. Further I declare, if God is father he is also mother, in union so strait that there is naught but God.

(They) 'stand without.' This signifies two things. First, that the soul is never so far merged in God but she imagines she is still outside. The other is, the soul who means to be God's

mother must be without, divorced from, things and in quest of thee, for the soul who wants to be and shall become God's mother must have forgotten all things and herself. Our Lady before she was God's mother in his humanity was God's mother in his deity, and the birth wherein she bear him in his Godhood is imaged in the birth of God in her, in his being born of her as man. My highest power is of such a nature that it lays hold of God, pours itself into him and unites with him. David very finely says, 'The Lord said unto my lord (thou art my Son) this day have I begotten thee.' In the reflection of the saints the Father is begetting his Son unceasingly. They are entirely renewed. Says the Father to the Son, 'I have begotten thee in my innermost Godhead' and he is always begetting himself in the innermost depths of the soul. It is the nature of God to be always begetting himself in the soul. It is the nature of the soul to transcend time and place in her higher reaches. Her nature never rests till she has wrought herself up to the supreme wherein the Father is conceiving himself. The Father naturally bears his Son in the soul, and his child-bearing is his speaking and his speaking is his child-bearing. The Father says to his Son, I have begotten thee and I bid thee beget thyself in Jacob and rest in Sion. What is Jacob? It is the soul that has put all things under her feet. In that soul there springs up a hot, burning desire, and the Son is then born as in the heavenly Father. Then the mind conceives God in his naked essence, so that what God has done the intellect does together with God. God has no hindrance to his flow, so he empties himself every whit into his only begotten (Son), and his only begotten Son shines into us. May this come to pass in us, So help us the living truth. Amen.

IX

THE SPARK

O thou sweet nature of the unborn light, purify my mind and enlighten my understanding so that I may be conscious of thee!

Christ said, My Father hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor. Bishop Albertus says God is in all things (*i.e.* in the soul). He has endowed her with virtues and with the wisdom which is in God, so that this wisdom is confined to himself. St John says we know that we love because we love without means. The Father is to us in his heart as he has been to us in his Son. St Augustine cries, Lord I cannot love thee, but come thou in and love thyself in me. According to St Paul we must put off our own natural form and put on the form of God, and St Augustine tells us to discard our own mode of nature, then the divine nature will flow in and be revealed. St Augustine says, Those who seek and find find not. He who seeks and finds not, he alone finds. St Paul says, What I was was not I, it was God in me. And St Paul declares that we are messengers or servants of the Spirit. St Augustine cries, I who have always been in God and ever more shall be, would sooner I had never been and nevermore should be than that we could understand a single word my Father God might say. St Bernard tells us to follow where God leads. Soaring wishes lose us what we have and fail to bring us what we want.

St John the Baptist was asked by his disciples, Where shall we go to see Him ? He answered, Why should I go and see in the flesh what I see spiritually ? St John most pregnantly affirms, The light is from the light and God from God. The Son is born of the substance of the Father. Wisdom says in her book, Ere the heavens and earth were made I emerged from the Supreme in eternal birth. Further, Wisdom says, I have caused to be born for you in the heavens a light that shall never go out.

Doctors declare concerning the inner senses that these are of two kinds, the highest and the lowest. The lowest come between the highest and the outward senses, and to these outer ones are near allied. What the eye sees or the ear hears is straightway seized by desire, provided it pleases, and conveyed to the critical faculty which considers it well and, if lawful,

passes it on to the superior powers which take it and carry it up to the chief power, without likeness, for this power admits neither image nor likeness. It is called sinderesis, and is all one with the soul's nature, a spark of the divine nature. It cannot abide what is not good. It is without stain; perfectly pure and wholly superior to temporal things it dwells in unchanging stability, like eternity. Anything that enters here must first be freed from multiplicity and sensible affections. The powers of the soul, outer and inner, are all summed up in this, and whatever gets into this highest power it passes on to all the rest, an act eternal in its nature: it is so quick it is practically timeless.

A heathen (master) says, That heart is pure which will not countenance a thing just because the world likes it. According to one of the saints, creatures which God has given us for a step-ladder to God we have ourselves made into an offence by stopping in them on our way to safety. A heathen (philosopher) says the *mens* is very pure, and if it loses nothing here neither does it yonder. Comparing like with like there is not much to choose, very little indeed, save that thou dost bring in more awareness than thou hadst in thy First Cause. A subtler heathen suggests that what we know of the First Cause is rather what we are ourselves than what the First Cause is, for that passes all understanding.

According to Gregory and Origen that man denies himself who from stubbornness changes to perfect humility, from greed to despisery of earthly things, and who, resigning his own will, endeavours to promote the will of God rather than his own felicity, and this with no hope of reward. In order to abide in a constant state of unity all this has to go. Work must be done simply for the work's sake and not for any why. One heathen philosopher claims that whatever you work at, whatever you do, if it wrests you from pride and multiplicity to humility and unity, without doubt it is good. Boëthius counsels, If thou wouldst know the naked truth then cast off joy and fear and faith and hope and pain and qualities in

general, all of them are means. As a heathen (philosopher) says, Discard all this and that and here and now and be thyself as thou art in thine innermost nature.

Outcast from his Father's home is he who governs not himself and follows not the true inner light.[1] Amen.

X

CHRISTMAS DAY

1

Ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum. Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy.

Gaude, rejoice and with divine joy, that which is wrought in the soul by God alone without any help from creature. *Honor* too means joy or honour: temporal joy, temporal honour which is frequently a hindrance to the spiritual life and to spiritual joy. Some feel joy when they have prayed well or made a good confession or heard good singing or a good discourse in church. This joy is good. But it is not the best, for it is quickly over; neither is it great since it is concerned with mortal things. It is true joy when the soul assembled in her inmost self becomes aware of a power, of a place in her from which God is never missing, wherein the heavenly Father is begetting his Son without ceasing. When the soul is aware of and alive to this then from this place divine joy flows into the soul.

Now the question is, Can any of the soul powers go on working while the Father is speaking his eternal Word supernaturally into the soul? You must know that the soul has two sets of powers, inner and outer. These must all be stilled and the powers which move the body as well. All these powers must be fetched in, not one of them is able to remain at work, the soul being simply the motionless form of the body. As the prophet says, 'While creatures were all asleep God spoke his silent word into my soul.'

[1] *mens.*

2

The third mass is sung in daylight and symbolizes the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ's manhood as revealed to all the world.

St John says : ' In the beginning was the Word.' According to St Augustine this is difficult to explain, and if John had expounded anything higher no one in the world would have understood him.

' In the beginningless beginning ' : in the Father. The Father is the source of the Son, but he is neither older nor younger than the Son, they are both equal. ' The Word was eternal ' : it has been in the Father eternally in essential unity. ' The Word was with God ' : it has been with the Father eternally in distinction of Person. ' And the Word was God ' : it has every perfection which in the Godhead is proper to it and to the Father and the Holy Ghost. ' The same was in the beginning with God ' : it is the same in the Father in essential unity as it is with the Father in its Personality. It is in the Father and with the Father, one with the Father in the power of the Word. ' All things were made by the Word.' With the power whereby the Father speaks his Word therewith he pronounces all things. A second meaning is : The Father speaks all things in the Son, and in that utterance all creatures proceed forth via the Word. ' Without him was not anything made ' : the power of the Godhead is in the Persons undivided. No person can work without the others in creatures. Begetting is the work of the Father and is an immanent act in God. To be born is proper to the Son. To be spirated is proper to the Holy Ghost. Thus each Person has its own characteristic property. But the work of flowing out into creatures, that the Father cannot do without the Son nor the Holy Ghost without them both, since the works of the Trinity are impartible. In another sense this refers to sin which has no existence yonder. It has no existence at all except in the soul ; for God made all things without sin which

is the work of the soul, and the devil. Lawlessness, breaking the law, that is sin. 'What was made by him was life in eternity.' Meaning, creatures have always had their prototype in him. God has always known them, those he would make and those he would not. 'And the life was the light of men.' Meaning that the soul has a spark in her which has been in God eternally: life and light. And this spark is conveyed into every man together with the soul. It is pure light in itself and is always censuring sin and urging to virtue while struggling all the time to get back to its source. 'What was made by him,' *i.e.* all that flowed out in the eternal Word is abiding within in essential unity. The spark of the soul cannot be extinguished either in hell or heaven. 'This light shines in the darkness.' This darkness means sin and sinners, and herein the spark never ceases exhorting against sin and urging conversion from it. Hence it is sometimes called the watcher of the soul. Daniel speaks of 'the watcher on the tower who calls aloud.' Some call this spark the haven of the soul. Some call it the eye (or growing-point) of the soul. Some call it the little god in the soul. Some call it the face of the soul. Some call it *intellectus*, a power energizing in the soul. Some call it *sinderesis*. Some call it the where of the soul. Some call it the nowhere of the soul. 'The darkness comprehended it not,' which means that neither in time nor place shall this spark ever be comprehended. No doctor could ever give it or call it by its proper name.

XI

Moyses orabat dominum deum suum (Ex. 32_{11}). I quote in Latin from the lesson for to-day. Moses besought the Lord his God saying, 'Lord, why is thy wrath enkindled against thy people?' God answered and said, 'Moses, let me alone, grudge not, permit, consent, that my wrath be kindled and that I reckon with the people.' And God made promises to Moses. He said, 'I will exalt thee and magnify thee and multiply thy seed and make thee ruler over a great nation.' Moses answered: 'Lord, forgive the people or strike me out of the Book of Life.'

What does he mean by saying, 'Moses besought the Lord his God'? Verily, if God is thy Lord then thou art his servant, but if thou dost work for the good of thyself or for thy own pleasure then in truth thou art not his servant, for thou art seeking not only God's glory but thine own profit. Why does he say, 'the Lord his God'? God wills that thou be sick and thou art bent on being sound; God wills thy friend shall die and thou, against God's will, that he shall live, then verily God is not thy lord. If thou lovest God then if thou art sick: 'In God's name'; if thy friend dies: 'In God's name'; he loses an eye: 'In God's name.' That is right. But when, being sick, thou does pray to God for health, then health is more dear to thee than God, so he is not thy God: he is the God of heaven and earth, but he is not thy God.

God says, 'Moses, let my wrath be kindled.' You will ask, perhaps, why God is angry. Because he is anxious for our happiness and is not seeking what is his; God is most distressed that we should jeopardise our felicity. God knows no greater sorrow than the martyrdom and death of our Lord Jesus Christ his only Son which he suffered for our salvation. God says, 'Moses, suffer my indignation.' See what a righteous man can do with God! It is of course true, is bound to be, that he who resigns his will wholly to God will catch God and bind him so that he can do nothing but what that man wills. He who makes over his will to God, to him God gives his will in return, so wholly, so really that God's will becomes that man's own, he having sworn by himself to do nothing but what that man will, but God will never be anyone's own who has not become his own first.

St Augustine cries, 'Lord thou wilt be no man's own until he has become thine own.' Night and day we cry to God, 'Lord thy will be done.' And when God's will does come to pass we grumble that it is all wrong. If our will is God's will, well and good, but if God's will is ours that is far better. Suppose thy will is God's will then if thou art ill thou wilt not, against God's

will, desire to be well, but thou wilt wish it were God's will that thou shouldst be well. And when things go wrong with thee thou wilt wish it were God's will that they should go right. But when God's will is thy will then if thou art sick : ' In God's name ' ; if thy friend dies : ' In God's name.' It is doubtless true and is bound to be that though it should entail all the pains of hell, of purgatory and the world, the will in union with the will of God would bear all this eternally, for ever in hell torment, and take it for its eternal bliss ; and resigning, in God's will our Lady's happiness and her perfection together with that of all the saints, it would remain for ever in eternal pain and bitterness, not wavering for an instant and with no thought of wishing things were otherwise. When the will is united so that it forms a single one, then the heavenly Father begets his only Son in himself and in me.—Why in himself, in me ?—Because I am then one with him, he cannot shut me out, and in that act the Holy Ghost receives his being, his working, his becoming from me as from God.—Why ?—Because I am in God : he cannot exclude me, not in any way.

Moses' will had grown to be so wholly God's will that God's honour with the people was more precious to him than his own felicity. God held out promises to Moses which Moses brushed aside ; had he promised his whole Godhood Moses would not have consented. And Moses besought God, saying : ' Lord strike me out of the Book of Life.' Theologians ask, did Moses love the people better than himself ? They say, no. For Moses knew quite well that by fostering reverence for God among the people he came nearer God than by being careless of God's honour and seeking his own happiness. And likewise it behoves the righteous man not to seek his own in all he does, but God's glory only. While in all thy doings thou art turned more towards thyself, or towards one person rather than another, thy will has not become God's will.

Our Lord says in the Gospel, ' My teaching is not mine but his who sent me.' And so with the good man it ought to be : my work is not my work ; my life is not my life. In this

disposition all the perfection, all the bliss St Peter had and that St Paul racked his brains to win, with all the felicity they have gotten from it, this I enjoy as well as they, and I look to enjoy it eternally as though it had been my own doing. More: all the work of all the saints and all the angels and that Mary God's mother ever did, from this I hope to reap eternal joy as though I had done it all myself.

I say, man and manhood are different. Manhood in itself is a most noble thing, at its highest it is level with the angels and near akin to Deity. The straitest union, which Christ had with the Father, this it is possible for me to win if only I were able to slough off what there is of this and that and realize my manhood. All God ever gave his only Son he has given me as much as him, no less. He has given me more. He gave more of my humanity in Christ to me than him, for he gave him nothing: he has had it in the Father eternally. Supposing I slay thee, I slay in the first place a Richard or a Henry, afterwards the man. Not so God. He took on manhood first. Who is man? He who is named after Jesus Christ's manhood. Hence our Lord says in the Gospel, 'Whoso offends one of these is offending me.'

But to return. 'Moses besought the Lord his God.' People are always asking God to do his best for them, but they have no intention of giving their best to God; they want to share with God, giving him a little and the worst at that. But the first thing God gives is himself. And having God thou hast all things with God. I have sometimes said, he who has God and all things with God has no more than one who has God alone. Also I maintain that a thousand angels are in eternity no more than two or one, because there is no number in eternity, it transcends number.

'Moses besought the Lord his God.' Moses, that means one who is rescued from the water. But it is the will I want to speak of now. To give an hundred marks of gold for God is a noble deed, and as such does it appear, yet I declare that if I have the will but no hundred marks to give, then, granting

the genuine intention, I have paid God the gold and he is bound to answer me as though I had given him the hundred marks. More, I say, had I a whole world to give, then with that intention I have given that whole world to God and he must answer me as though I had given a whole world to him. I say, if I had slain the pope with my own hand but unintentionally, I would none the less go up to the altar and say mass as usual. I say, manhood in the wretchedest, most despicable man is as perfect as it is in king or pope, and manhood in itself I hold more dear than the man in me. May we be thus atoned with God, So help us the truth whereof I speak. Amen.

XII

Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justiciam etc. (*Matth.* 5_6). And *Qui sequetur justiciam diligetur a domino* (*Prov.* 15_9). I have taken one sentence from the epistle for the day and another from the gospel. King Solomon says in the epistle, ' God loves them that follow after righteousness.' St Matthew has another saying: ' Blessed are the poor and they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, that follow after it, (for they shall be filled).' Mark the words, ' God loves.' As I have often said, a great reward is mine, no less than being loved by God, always providing I desire it. What does God love? God loves nothing but himself and his own likes so far as he can find them in me and in him. In the Book of Wisdom it is written, ' God loves none but the man who abideth in wisdom.' And there is another saying, still better, in the scriptures: ' God loves those who follow after justice and wisdom.' Theologians are agreed that God's wisdom is his only Son. It says in this passage, ' those who follow after righteousness and wisdom,' so he loves those who follow him: he loves nothing in us except in so far as he finds us in him. They are worlds apart, God's loving and our loving. We love only inasmuch as we find God in what we love. Had I forsworn it yet could I love nothing but goodness. But God loves a man inasmuch as he is good, not that he finds in man anything to love excepting his own

goodness, and so far as we are in him and in his love, that is given. It is thanks to his love that we are in him and dwelling in wisdom.

According to St Paul, 'we shall be changed in love.' Mark the words, 'God loves.' A miracle! What is God's love? His nature and his essence, that is his love. To rob God of his love for us would rob him of his being, of his Godhood, seeing that his love for me is his very self. And in this wise the Holy Ghost proceeds. Good God, what miracle is this! If God is loving me with his whole nature, and this depends upon it, then God loves me just as though his being and becoming hung thereon. God has but one love: the selfsame love with which the Father loves his Son, therewith he loves me.

Now another meaning. At the same time you will see how true the scriptures are if one takes the trouble to find out what they mean. He says, 'those who follow after righteousness in wisdom.' To the just man justice is so necessary that he can love nothing but justice. As I often say, were God not just he would care nothing for God. Wisdom and justice are the same in God. There the lover of truth loves justice too, and if the devil were just he would love him as well, so far as he was just and not a hair's-breadth more. The just man loves nothing of God's, this or that; if God were to give him all his wisdom and everything he could except himself, he would take no pleasure in it or care for it at all: he wants nothing, seeks nothing, has no cause for doing anything. As God works without a why and has no cause, so does the just man work without a why, and as life is living for its own sake and seeks no cause for living so neither has the just man any motive for his deeds.

Then as to the words, 'they hunger and thirst after righteousness.' What are we to understand by this? Our Lord says, 'They that eat me shall hunger, they that drink me shall increase their thirst.' What does this mean? It is not true of bodily things: the more a man eats the more he is filled. But with spiritual things there is no satiety, the more we have

the more we want. Hence the words, 'They shall grow thirstier, those who drink me, and hungrier those who eat me.' These are so hungry for the will of God and relish it so much, everything God sends them is so much to their liking, pleases them so well, they would not wish it otherwise. While a man is hungry he enjoys his food, and the hungrier he is the more satisfaction does he find in eating. It is the same with those who hunger after righteousness and the will of God: to them his will, whatever God wills, is very good, they are so satisfied with everything he sends that supposing God wanted to spare them they would refuse to be spared. So content they are with the sovran will of God. If I wanted to get into somebody's good graces, wanted to please him and him alone, then the things that person liked and which gave him pleasure would be my first care. Suppose I pleased him better in fustian than in velvet then fustian doubtless I should wear in preference to any other dress. And the same with anyone who delights to do the will of God: whatever God may send, sickness or poverty or whatever it may be, he will prefer, since it is God's will. He will like it much better than anything else.

Here you will be asking, 'How do I know it is God's will?'—Believe me, were it not God's will then in a trice it would not be. It must always be his will. If now the will of God seemed good to thee thou wouldst be as it were in heaven no matter what might happen or not happen to thee, and those who desire something other than God's will get also their just due: they are always complaining and unhappy, always the victims of violence and wrong, constantly in trouble. It is only just. They are selling God just as Judas sold him. They love God for something else, not God. And they get, quite rightly what, forgetting God himself, they love him for—devotion or delight or whatever coin they may be paid in. These things are none of them God.

It is written that 'The world was made by him, and that which was made knew him not.' Anyone who fondly thought a thousand worlds plus God was more than God alone would

know nothing of God, he would have no notion what God is and would be a boor. Never mind what is with God. As I have often said, he who seeks aught in addition to God knows not what he seeks.

When the Son is born in us we, being without why, are reborn in the Son. Origen has a fine saying which I will quote, although it may sound to you incredible: 'We are not only in-born in the Son, we are born out and born in again and new born and born without means in the Son.' I say, and it is true, that in every good thought and good deed and good intention we are always born anew in God. And, as I was saying, the Father has got nothing but one only Son, so the less we pay attention to and care for other things than God, the more we stop looking out, the more we shall be transformed in the Son and the more the Son will be born in us and we be born in the Son and be the Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Son of the Father and he alone is man and God. There there is but one Son, one in nature: the divine nature. We shall be made one with him if our affections are set on him alone. God is ever alone, that must needs be, and the only thing for us to do is to bear God alone in mind.

God has poured out into creatures joy and satisfaction, true, but the root of satisfaction, the essence of enjoyment God has reserved to himself alone. Take an illustration. Fire, in its heat, throws out its roots into water, and when the fire goes out its warmth remains in the water for a while, and so it does in wood, according to the time the fire was present and also to its heat. The sun, on the other hand, shines through the air and illumines it, but its roots it does not throw therein, for when the sun is gone we have no more light. It is the same with God and creatures. The appearance of satisfaction he throws into creatures, but the root he keeps in him, so that he may have us for himself and himself alone. God has put himself out for the soul and has gone half-way to meet her. He has tried with all his godhood to make himself agreeable to the soul, for God intends to please the soul, and he will brook no

rival. God permits of no compulsion, but neither will he be a party to our loving or desiring aught but him.

Some people fondly thinking they are very holy, very perfect, take to talking big and having large ideas; they are pompous and pretentious and make much ado about themselves, about this thing and that, pretending to devotion although they are impatient of a word. You may be sure that they are far from God and not in union with him. The prophet says, 'I have poured out my soul into myself,' and St Augustine says better: I have poured out my soul over myself: needs must she rise above me to become one in the Son; and in so far as she transcends herself she does become one with the Son. St Paul says, 'We shall be transformed into the same image that he is.'

It has been said that virtue is no virtue except it is from God or for God or in God. It must be one of these three. Otherwise it would not be virtue, for the human will is too feeble without God. Virtue is God or immediately in God. But which is the best I will not tell you now. You will say, 'Tell us, Sir, what this means. How can we be in God with nothing between, not minding, not seeking aught else than God? How can we be as poor as that and give up everything? It is a hard saying that we must look for no reward.'—Be sure God will not fail to give us all; though he swore not to he could not but give us himself. Far greater is his need to give to us than ours is to take; but we ought not to look for it, the less we look and long for it the more God gives. In this way God designs simply to make us richer and more able to receive.

I am in the habit of saying sometimes when I pray: Lord, it is such a little thing we ask, were anyone to ask me I would do it for him, and it is not only a hundred times easier for thee than me, but also thou art more inclined to do it; and even if we asked thee for some greater thing it would become thee well to grant it; and the bigger it is the more gladly dost thou give it, for God is ready to give royally, provided we give up everything in the way we ought. May we follow after right-

eousness in wisdom, hunger and thirst for it till we get our fill. So help us God. Amen.

XIII [1]

Euge serve bone et fidelis (*Matt.* 25_{23}). We read in the Gospel the saying of our Lord, 'Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy lord: because thou hast been faithful over little I will set thee over all my goods.' [2]

Let us examine the words used by our Lord. He says, 'good and faithful servant.' Now in another Gospel our Lord says to a disciple who addressed him as 'good,' 'Why callest thou me good? none is good but God only,' which is of course true. Creature as such is not good. Nothing whatever is good except God alone. Did God then contradict himself? No, not at all. The argument is this. So far as man denies himself for God and is atoned with God to that extent he is more God than creature. The man who quits himself for God, who belongs to none but God and lives for none save God alone, verily he is by grace what God is by nature and God knows no difference between him and this man. I say, 'by grace,' for God is and this man is, and as God is good by nature so this man is good by grace, since it is God's life, his being, entirely, which is in this man. Our Lord called this man good—'good servant' are the words he used—for this servant is good in the sight of God with no other goodness than that wherewith God is good. I have often said that God's life and God's being are in a stone, in a bit of wood and in other creatures which are not blest. God is in this servant in a different way which makes him blest and good: he is in him for his own enjoyment, living in and with him as blissfully, as consciously as in and by himself, so he is blest and good. That is why our Lord says, 'good servant.'

[1] See also Schmidt's No. 11 (marked 'Eckhart' in his index), which has been freely used in the translation. For a modern German version, see Büttner, vol. i, No. 7.

[2] Repetitions of these words have been omitted where they appeared to be unnecessary.

Having said something of his goodness, why this servant was good, I will now tell you of his faithfulness, for our Lord says 'good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over little,' etc. Let us see what this 'little' is over which the servant has been faithful. Everything God has created in heaven and on earth, what is not himself, all this counts as little in his eyes. Over all these things this good servant has been faithful. I will tell you in what way. God has set this servant betwixt eternity and time. He was not pledged to either, he was free in mind and will and in every way. In his mind he ran through all the things God has created; in his will he gave up everything including his own self and all God has created, (all) that is not God himself. Mentally he took them up, and giving God praise and glory for them, surrendered them to God, to his unfathomable nature, and himself to boot so far as he is creature. There he left himself and all things never to touch them any more, or anything created, with his created will. Verily, any one so faithful, God would have in him such ineffable delight that to rob him of his joy would be to rob him at one stroke of his life, his being, and his Godhood. Further I say, fear not, this joy is near you, is in you: there is not one of you so unenlightened, so dull-witted, so remote, but he may find this joy within himself, really, as it is, with joy and with understanding, before ye leave this church to-day, aye, before I finish preaching, he may find it all within him, feel it, possess it, as true as God is God and I am a man. Be sure of this, for it is true, the truth himself has said so, as I am going to show you in a parable taken from the Gospel.

Once upon a time our Lord was sitting on a well, for he was weary. Then came a woman, a Samaritan and heathen, bringing a pitcher and a line, meaning to draw water. Our Lord said to her, 'Woman, give me to drink.' She answered him, saying, 'Why dost thou ask drink of me? Thou art of the Jews and I am a Samaritan; our people and your people have no dealings with each other.' Our Lord replied, saying, 'Didst thou know who it is that asks thee for drink, and knewest

the gift of God, peradventure thou wouldst have asked to drink of me and I would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water that I give shall never thirst and from it shall spring up a fountain of eternal life.' The woman was struck by our Lord's words, and going close up to the well, she asked, 'Sir, give me to drink of this water that I may never thirst again.' Then said our Lord, 'Go and bring thy husband.' She said, 'Sir, I have no husband.' And our Lord replied, 'Woman, thou hast well said, for thou hast had five husbands, and him thou now hast is not thine husband.' At this she dropped her jug and line and addressed our Lord, saying: 'Who art thou? It is written that when Messias cometh whom men call Christ, he shall teach us all things and shall make known to us the truth.' Quoth our Lord, 'Woman, I am he, who is talking to thee,' and at these words her heart was full. 'Lord,' she said, 'our fathers worshipped under the trees and on the mountain and your fathers the Jews worshipped in the Temple. Sir, to which prayer does God hearken most and which is the best place? Tell me.' Then said our Lord, 'Woman, the day cometh and now is when true worshippers shall worship not only on the mountain and in the Temple but in [the Holy] spirit and in truth; for God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, and the Father seeketh such to worship him.' At this the woman was filled with God, filled to overflowing, welling over with divine fullness, and crying with a loud voice, wanting to bring to God everyone she saw and make them full of God like herself. This befell, mark you, when she had fetched her husband. God never gives himself to the soul overtly, wholly, unreservedly, unless she brings her man, that is, her free will.

Our Lord said, 'Woman, thou sayest well, thou hast had five husbands, who are dead, and he whom thou now hast is not thine.' Who were these five husbands? They were her five senses. Therewith she had sinned and therefore they were dead. 'And the husband thou now hast is not thine,' meaning her free will, which did not belong to her, for it was bound in

mortal sin and was not under her control, so it was not hers, for what a man does not control does not belong to him, rather is it his who can control it. I say that when a man, in grace, has mastered his free will and is ready to unite it with the will of God, wholly and as a single one, then he need only say, as this woman did, Lord, tell me how to pray and what to do to please thee best. And Jesus answers, reveals himself that is to say, really and wholly and all, all he is, filling the soul to overflowing; it comes welling up and running over with the overfull fullness of God, as it quickly happened with this woman at the well who before was quite unready for it. And so I say again, as I have said before, there is no one here so dull, so ignorant or so unprepared but if by grace he were to atone his will wholly, perfectly with the will of God, then he would only need to say with desire and intention, 'Lord, show me thy will and strengthen me to do it,' and God does so, as surely as he lives. God will give him fullness as bountiful and perfect as he ever gave that woman. So, you see, the most benighted of you, the most insignificant among you may have gotten this from God before he leaves this church to-day—aye, while I am still speaking—really, as true as God is God and I am a man. Wherefore I say, fear not, this joy is not far from you, if only ye will seek it with a will.

Now to return. Our Lord said, 'I will set thee over all my goods.' What is meant by the Lord's goods? It means goodness as scattered and covered up in all things and all creatures which are good with his goodness in heaven and on earth. That is what is meant by the Lord's goods. For none is good, nor has goods or goodness save from him only. It is all his property, and so is everything that we can say of God himself or can grasp with the mind or in any way bring to light and prove. All this belongs to the Lord, and over it all will be set this servant who has been good and faithful over little: over all this good he is (now) lord, another and yet the same, a something that *is* but is not this or that and is neither here nor there.

Now I have told you what the Lord's good means. He said, 'I will set thee over my whole good,' as though to say, 'Have done with all created good, all separate good, all piecemeal good, over all this will I set thee in the uncreated, undivided, undismembered good that I am myself. Referring to this he says, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' or, in other words, give up all joy which is partial, which is not of itself that which it is, and seek the impartible joy which of itself and in itself is that which it is and which is none other than the joy of the Lord.

One word more. What is the joy of the Lord? A curious expression. How should one explain or speak, even, of what no man can know or understand? But mark this about it. The joy of the Lord is the Lord himself, none other, and the Lord is living, essential, actual intellect which understands itself and is and is living itself in itself and is *the same*. To it I attribute no mode; I have taken from it all mode, for it is itself modeless mode which is and is glad that it is. This is the joy of the Lord and is the Lord himself. Into this he bade his servant enter, saying, 'Good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Because thou hast been faithful (over little) therefore will I set thee over my whole good.' May we too be good and faithful, so that our Lord shall invite us also to enter in and dwell with him eternally, So help us God. Amen.

XIV[1]

Christ said, 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Let us see what this means. The Father himself hears nothing, knows nothing, says nothing, gets nothing but this same Word, and in this same Word the Father hears and knows and begets himself as well as this same Word and all things and his Godhood fundamentally and himself as to his nature and this Word with this same nature in another Person. Then as to the manner of his speaking. The Father

[1] Excerpt. See also Schmidt, No. 40.

bearing fruit, delivers himself of his own nature all at once in his eternal Word, intellectually not willingly, as an act of will. Things done or spoken by the power of his will in that same power he can also not do an he will. It is not so with the Father and his eternal Word: whether he would or no he must speak this Word, begetting it without ceasing: with the Father it is as it were rooted in his nature naturally just as the Father is himself. So you see the Father speaks the Word willingly but not by will, naturally not by nature. In this Word the Father speaks my and thy and each man's spirit equally with that same Word. In that speaking thou and I are the natural Son of God just the same as the Word itself. For, as I have said, the Father knows nothing but this Word and himself and all divine nature and all things in this Word, and everything he knows therein tallies with the Word and by nature is in truth the Word itself.

When the Father gives, reveals to thee this gnosis, he is giving thee his life and his being and his Godhood all at once and really and in truth. The mortal father shares with his child his nature, not his being or his life. The child has another life and being than that which the father has himself. The proof is this. The father may die and the child live, or the child may die and the father live. With the same life and being they must needs live and die together, since the life and being of them both would then be one. It is not so with the mortal father and his son. In this they are strangers to each other, separated as they are from one another in life and being. If I take fire from one place to another it makes separate fires: this may burn and that go out or this go out and that one go on burning. It is neither one nor yet eternal.

But as I was saying: the Father of heaven gives thee his eternal Word, and in that Word he is giving thee at once his very life, his being and his Godhood; for the Father and the Word are two Persons and one life and one being undivided. When the Father finds thee in this light beholding intellectually this light—according to its property—in this light itself even

as he in his paternal power perceives himself and all things as the Word in word and truth, then he gives thee the power of begetting, with himself, thyself and all things and his own power even this same Word. So thou with the Father and in the Father's power art begetting thyself and all things without ceasing in the present now. In this light, as I have said, the Father knows no difference between thee and him nor anything to choose, whether more or less, between him and his Word. For the Father and the soul and all things and the Word itself are one in that light.

XV

'Master, where dwellest thou?' said a certain man to our Lord. Christ answered and said unto him, 'Come and see.' These words tell us of three things: of the abundant wisdom of Christ's teaching; of his infinite being which is the basis of all being—(these two) by the question, 'Where dwellest thou?'—and thirdly of God's comforting invitation to us to seek him in spirit in his divine abode and learn for ourselves in the school of wisdom. 'Come,' he says, 'and stay with me and in me. To thee will I open the abyss of my heart.' Another time our spirit is snatched out of the presence of God. Know, all creatures are asking this question, they are eager for being, to find divine being; all study of the works of nature is nothing but a search, a quest for, a question about the dwelling of God. Unless they did this heaven and the firmament would be at a standstill. But, my children, why ask outside yourselves and seek for God in strange lands of dead things? Not there shall ye find him. They all say nay and send you on, crying, 'We are not God.' St Augustine's counsel is, 'Lift thyself up above thyself, out into eternal things.' 'God is there.' Now you must understand that man finds God in many ways; from these the soul may take a lesson.

To begin with, God is found in the exaltation of at-one-ment,

when the soul is trying with all her might to give up her own will. The more the soul makes a practice of this the more apt she is to find God in her and herself in him. This is what the bridegroom means where he says, in the Book of Love, 'I will go to the mountain of myrrh and will speak with my friend.' The mountain of bitter myrrh is the high and noble frame of mind which transmutes all desire for personal satisfaction into bitterness towards everything God would not have in us. Then God says in spirit to the soul, 'Friend mine, how beautiful thou art: thou art spotless in mine eyes.' But he who floats with the tide of his own will does not find God, and he is unsuccessful in all his undertakings.

Secondly, God is found in the bush which grows in the desert, where Moses found him. The bush in the desert is the higher mind which, in a land quite strange to creatures, is growing green and flowering on the heights of the eternal Godhead. And just as divine being enters into, is embraced in the three Persons, so this mind embraces God in its triple powers. This growing causes the soul to wax in light and in love till she sees God in Zion in the aspect of an angel. Inasmuch as thou hast found God thou wilt turn from what is unlike him, and to-day more than yesterday. But in order to find God like this a man has to cast out all animal feelings and with Moses obey the law of the mind, for flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God. I ween, O soul, that all thy shortcomings are due to the fact that sudden emotions affecting the heart from without are translated by thee into action ere the light of discrimination shines in.

Thirdly, God is found on the mountain in the cloud where the eternal law of God was written with God's finger. The mountain is the pregnant and great-hearted soul who finds no peace or satisfaction in his work unless he, like St Paul, has gotten a definite pledge, in whatever he does, of its being God's will, for then the will of the soul makes for ends not only human and proper to itself but divine as well, according to some prescribed form of God's will, so that the soul can say

with St Paul, 'I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me. I neither work nor do I live any more; it is the actual power of the divine essence which is energizing in me.' This takes place in the cloud, in the dazzling splendour of the divine light, for any light that man may get from creatures is as night to day. Though it may be a help in finding the divine light yet creatures are a hindrance if we linger upon them too long with delight. Says one of the saints, 'The creatures God has given us for a step-ladder to God we have ourselves made into an offence by settling down in them and stopping on our way to safety.'

Then, God is found in the cave by the prophet. We read that the prophet went into the desert and wished for his soul that she might die, for his spirit had grown weary of the restlessness of this world. And in his sleep an angel came and set beside him a hearth-cake and a cruse of water. After that he journeyed forty days and nights till he came to the place where he found God. There arose a tempest, breaking the rocks in pieces; but God was not in the wind, for God shuns the spirits that are driven by the wind, like those the prophet Daniel saw struggling in the sea: in lawless hearts irrational hopes and fears which blind the light of the spirit. And the tempest also means to us the restless heart which is ever a bitter trial to his fellow Christians. Breaking the rocks means disturbing the peace of serious-minded people. Afterwards came a fire, and God was not in the fire. Fire is a thing that never cries 'enough.' It stands for the heart that never cries 'enough,' which has an inordinate burning desire for things that are not godly. Such ingratitude dries up the flow of the divine river. This was followed by a sweet May dew. God came in that. It refers to the mind in which, in divine imitation of the sweet uses in the eternal Word, there is formed the word of the intellect wherein the yearning soul softly whispers with God, wordlessly, noiselessly, singing her minnesong in him but without sound. God comes in this, for in intimate converse of this sort God is surely drawn into the soul.

Of this surety they are unworthy who too freely admit from without the words of men or even of an angel. Hence the desire of the bride where, in the Book of Beautiful Love, she invites the north wind to sweep through her: (to sweep out), she means, all the lumber of creatures blocking the way of the spirit. Towards this same north wind was turned the seething caldron of the prophet's vision, wherein the freshness of God's gift was all withered up, and his soul was disquieted within him, for he had no abiding-place in spiritual things. So the soul cries, 'Come, sweet south wind, blow through my garden and make my heart flow with divine fragrance.'

In the fourth place, God is found above the angels, for the soul must transcend the angelic light if she wants to find God, although she is by nature lower than the angels. Next, God is found in the Father. Thy soul must offer up all she does to God, quite free from thine own selfhood, if thou wouldst find him, just as the eternal Word offers himself up in the Father.

Sixthly, John found God. 'In the beginning was the Word,' he says. Andrew and with him every faithful soul inquires, 'Master, where dwellest thou?' John tells you, in the beginning. Let us seek God so that we find him in himself, so help us God. Amen.

XVI

In the hands let the lanterns burn. Dionysius says God has joined the end of the first to the end of the next. The first creature is simply intelligent, an angel. The second one, man, is intelligent and at the same time matter. What time the light suffuses the soul's darkness there kindles the first light of the soul, the discriminating power which seeks the truth in shifting images which wax and wane. In blissful peace, free from motion, there alone does the light of pure intellect burn with insight into the truth and hence one doctor (speaks of) 'the light of wisdom sparkling in the shadow of the rational mind.' As upon a step-ladder the soul mounts up to knowledge

of the first nature. In a certain means the soul is conveyed into the First Cause. But eternal heavenly things both corporal and mental can unite with the lowest in this light only in so far as there reigns in the soul the first work of God which is prior to and the basis of all God's revelations to the soul; and this theologians call a light, grace namely. And seeing we cannot be happy without it therefore God bids us carry this light in our hands, not smother it in ourselves, and in that same light climb back to God, where we possess our highest happiness.

In these words God teaches us two things, which concern the welfare of all serious people, namely, to know and to love. The first is proper to the Son who in his radiant emanated image leads the soul into the bottomless abyss of the overflowing intellect of the Father. The second is proper to the Holy Ghost who in the exuberance of his bliss sweeps the soul up and over all things and makes hard and bitter the service of creatures by reason of the claims of a higher love. The first stands for God in the light, the second for God in the fire.

Concerning the first the scriptures speak of seven kinds of light. These are spiritual activities, activities, I mean, in which the spark of true intelligence shines and unceasingly orders the work to the highest good of the soul as to its end. Not with any creaturely object in view, for thereby all gain to the soul is lost. This requires that in all thy doings thou observe the law of truth which is shining eternally in the highest kingdom of thy soul. It is the ray or spark of the soul which is giving us counsel all the while, so that thou shalt pass on to any given person what is an open book to you concerning him, as though all human nature were contained in thee and thy nature were everybody's nature, thou seeing thyself in everyone and everyone in thee. This gives an extraordinary beauty and delight to the operations of the soul, a beauty not discerned by fleshly eyes. It is recorded by a brother that often while engaged in prayer he was in a state of such unspeakable sweetness that he would not have wished his peace of mind disturbed

were it to see at his cell door Christ in his perfect manhood as he was born of Mary's womb, yet in the mortal face of Christ the angels take ineffable delight. My children, conform your works to this pattern in the secret places of your mind and purify your desires in accordance with the sovran good which is shining in the soul. When thy mind is freed from its activities and wholly abstracted into the unconditioned divine state then all fear and narrow-mindedness must die in thee, no matter what is thrust in from outside. Then it is given to thy spirit to be guided in all it does by the spirit of God. That sometimes, owing to the divine abstraction of the soul from mortal affairs, the body, returning to its nature, lingers in the midst of pleasure, is due to the influx of divine light into all activities.

The second light is the light of faith, a form of light as it were natural to the soul. The soul is not found in the light above this except by reflection. The light of faith takes the soul on into God, though only an image as in a mirror, not naked essence (?), which we in this world are not able to see unveiled. But on the contrary some doctors say God might create a creature to whom he gave a natural light brighter than the light of glory wherein the angels are beholding face to face. 'Why should not God,' they ask, 'throw a light into the soul in which she could see God undisguised?' I answer, were God to give the soul a natural light a thousand times as bright as the light of glory she could not see God in it; for this vision is gained in an ineffable supernatural touching, a sinking immediately into the soul of the essential divine form. This heavenly informing cannot happen to thee here direct; but during thy sojourn here thou canst at least turn inwards, always keeping thy mind free from sudden agitations, which hinder clear vision of the divine essence. When this (beatific vision) does befall in thee thou shalt discover that everything under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit.

XVII

THE BEATIFIC VISION

'Behold I make all things new.' St John says this in the Book of Revelation, and we read it at the annual church festival. Augustine says it is good to seek the will of God, and asks 'why does God do so and so?' But to seek the cause of the will of God is to seek something prior to, higher than God, whose will is himself. He who seeks (n)aught shall find naught. Beware then of human curiosity, lest seeking what is naught we lose the aught which (is) eternal. Although now we see no cause why God created creatures, yet we have some indication in the fact that creatures, various angels and some men, have exuberant delight in the three Persons, in their eternal intercourse and uses, in the intellectual vision of God's essential nature, in the undefined real presence of the formless form of divine Being. In the highest light of mental gnosis, therein the ground of beatitude lies. Accordingly there springs up and grows within the will a prelude of delights which the vision adorns as bloom does youth, and therein is revealed to all creatures the splendour and majesty of his estate, and concerning it he says, 'Behold I make all things new.' Our annual festival commemorates the eternal happening depicted here. But since God has specially designed his joys for the human soul, that she may be happy in him, therefore the words apply to us in two particulars. First, to the noble nature of the soul, for he calls the soul by the name of all things. The second reference is to the natural end (perfection) of the soul, which consists in bringing the soul, by knowing and loving, face to face with unveiled divine nature. And this he does for us in the renewing of the soul.

Now mark in the first place how the soul is all things. She has being with the stones and growing with the trees and feeling with the beasts and understanding with the angels. Moreover, she is just the same apart from form and intellect. According to the author of the book *On the First Cause* the soul is created

on the confines of eternity and time, so she sees into both and contains them both intelligibly. All things lead up to man. God made man last of all his creatures, on the sixth day, and was pleased thereon to feast his eyes, for in the soul he recognized his own reflection. Again, we might doctrinally liken the soul to all things, for the soul can win the blessings and rewards of all deserving creatures as we see especially with the soul of Christ and of our Lady, more even than the angels. For the soul goes on growing without end. Also, when the soul has deserved reward of the rewarding grace of Christ the bestowal has been wholly disproportionate, so that no creature can of its own nature see true in the mirror of God's nature, not even angels of the highest choir, excepting one soul, Christ's. Wherefore our Lord says, ' And I if I am lifted up from earth will draw all things to me,' meaning the soul.—Then, as to the renewal of the soul. Here you must bear in mind that what is new is near to its beginning. The fount of the soul is the eternal outpouring from the Father's heart, formally that is. But causally all, the whole (?) Trinity is the source; not the Persons in their separate reflections but in their perfect community of essence with, besides, the purpose of the will of God as dictated by the eternal law of wisdom, else were the soul eternal like her source, which the faith denies. God says he will draw the soul to him, and she shall be made new, for she has wandered far from him and in the death-throes of unlikeness caused by the assaults of lethal things has lost her pristine bloom, her first God-given freshness. Then the soul can say in spirit with the prophet, ' My youth is renewed like the eagle's and my life is blossoming afresh in God.' This is due to the precept and the practice of the seven virtues, the six works of mercy, the eight beatitudes and the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost. Up then, glad soul, renew yourself ! You can do it in this world. Not that God's plan is this alone, for in this life there is not yet finished even the first festival of dedication ; its pattern of perfection is in the exalted Godhead. There God renews the (soul ?), restoring her to her original

rank, and purifies her powers from all traces of mortality and sets her in the light of glory. Then God renews the soul so that the soul beholds herself in the pure being of God : herself, I say, as herself, blessed and really existent, natural and spiritual that is to say. Thereafter she beholds herself not as herself : she sees herself in God as eternal and divine.—Thirdly, God finally renews the soul when in ever new fresh-springing glory he presents himself to the intellect, and to desire as longing fulfilled, so the soul is ever thirsting and at the same time drinking. Then the soul is dowsed in divine nature, then she receives divine light.

XVIII

Si quis vult etc. God has poured all creatures out of himself in their natural state so that they might flow back in floods of glory. God has shown people his natural form (exemplary nature), his Son, so that in trying to copy him they may be led to the habit of the thought-free mind, to the first intelligible essence.[1] And since the very highest grade of perfection depends on the freeing of the mind from capricious variations and from creature consolations, therefore God says, ' Si quis vult etc. If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.' This saying is taken in four ways. According to Gregory and Origen, that man denies himself who from stubbornness changes to perfect humility ; from greed to despisery of earthly things, and who, foregoing his own will, endeavours to promote the will of God rather than his own felicity. In the book called *The Well of Life* it tells of a disciple questioning his master about escaping death if only he could find the well of life. The master said, ' Thou hast to escape from everything the outward senses perceive and in the summit of thy soul lift thyself up above thyself into the things which transcend all change, which no time can touch.

[1] The ' intelligible essences ' or ' exemplary natures ' of the Schoolmen correspond to Plato's Ideas. The ' first intelligible essence ' is the divine essence, the ' beatific vision ' of which is the goal of life : the return of man to his source.

Then thou shalt offer thyself up without reserve to the generous dispenser of all boons. When this work is finished in thee thou art in the well of life.'—John of the golden mouth, again, alluding to this saying lays it down that 'whosoever would be saved must first be purged by suffering; then he must die to all things, and she (the soul) has to die to all things.' Gregory says, a man can have no notion of the things that are above him until he has some notion of what he is himself. And Augustine says what amounts to the same thing: 'If a man wants his soul to be full of the light let him first heal the inner eye of the soul.' After that he must cultivate this salutary state if the eye of the soul is to stand the light from above. Thirdly, the eye must never rove or rest elsewhere excepting in this light, nor in this light see anything except the light itself. But anyone who turns within before his sight is clear will be repelled, for this light blinds weak eyes. That is why King David wished for a pure heart and after that for the Holy Spirit which is given to none unless his inmost thoughts have been withdrawn and are far removed from all desire of mortal things. This condition is followed by the fourth, that now it is not just a stab but an abiding in the ineffable light where one really sees and knows it is only an illusion, all the sun is shining on. But I think we can find a deeper meaning in this saying, if you will follow me. God is pure being, and there is nothing in him other than pure being. If I say, then, God is God or good or kind or wise or anything else that I can predicate of God, it all amounts to nothing more than if I said, God is. For God's being, which I mean when I say God is, is his divinity, his eternity, his wisdom, which I am speaking of when I affirm that God is good or wise. Therefore he told Moses, 'Say, *He who is* hath sent me.' Anything that falls short of God is by that fact something. I cannot now just say of it, it is. If I say it is an angel then by calling it an angel I deny it any other nature that other creatures have. And the more so since an angel has his own specific nature and is a natural descent from God. Yet by reason of nearness to

God each angel possesses all that is possible to his natural grade of perfection, and hence it comes about that to every grade of angelic nature there belongs one angel. So many grades so many angels, neither more nor less. And here we note the marvellous adornment of the angels and the perfection of virtues which is theirs owing to their natural proximity to God. Yet as being inferior to God they are something, somewhat that has essence (species). Human nature also is inferior to God, but a man is not a species because man is more inferior to God than angelic nature (is). No mere man is able to possess all that is possible to his grade of human nature. It follows that in any grade of human nature there are many men at once. So if I belong to it, and a certain person and another one, then the essence (species) will belong to each. But the essence common to all creatures is an outflowing of the pure fount of the divine essence and divine nature which is being itself. And since everything that flows out is trying to get back to its source therefore angel and man must deny their own being and cast themselves into the being which, against nature, is fighting its way back to God, whence it flowed out. Together man and angel come running back to God, bare of temporal accretions. Well then may it be said, 'Whosoever will come to me, to my pure divine being, let him free himself from himself, what he is, and follow him from whom he is.' Anyone who puts this saying into practice has gotten within reach of the divine treasure of spiritual perfection, and by pursuing it he will be led to the Sovran Good that has neither end nor beginning. Amen.

XIX [1]

Mary Magdalene sat at the feet of our Lord and listened to his words. Martha said, 'Lord, dost thou not care that I am busy? Bid her help me.' Christ answered, 'But one thing is needful for eternal happiness, to behold, enjoy and suffer God.' God would not be happy were he not speaking the

[1] This seems to be a collection of Meister Eckhart's sayings.

Eternal Word. Christ would not be happy were he not hearing the Eternal Word. Creatures' being is all a matter of doing. When they stop doing they stop being. God's doing is his being. Were he not working he would not be existing. His working is his speaking. God can do nothing but speak the Eternal Word. If we are to be we must do and our doing is hearing the Eternal Word. The soul of Christ was happy only because of hearing the Eternal Word. Christ was united with the Godhead: God was man, man God, as we might say. But surely, had a single drop of Deity flowed into his body his body would be deathless: man could not have put God to death. The body of Christ was united, and this union could not give him that. Christ, without doing, would be as imperfect as I. It is my happiness to have God speaking in me. When God is speaking he is working and when he is working he is speaking. God is happy inasmuch as he is saying the Eternal Word. Seneca says, 'Believe me, no one is happy and rich.' Rich of this world is not happy, man serves his possessions. If I serve riches I am in service. In service my freedom is lost and I am not happy. In the service of God a man enjoys all things in God. If I am not my own master I am not happy. That man is his own master on whom creatures have not enough hold to sway him for good or for ill. Unhappy is the man who has no power to draw upon his treasure in God. My happiness is nothing else than clearly seeing and hearing and experiencing God. Mary listened to his words. If I am to hear the Eternal Word things must all be silent in me.

Perfection in each creature means the silence of the rest. For God to speak in me creatures must hold their peace. If thou hast anything speaking in thee God will say nothing: everything must have stopped speaking. Where God is present things have all said their say. Into him who is full of God there can get nothing at all. Paul says, 'Your life shall be like a lamp, wherein shines eternal life.' I must keep this to myself: touching the naked Godhead I am dumb. If I am made in the image of God his image must be in me. The Word

in which I am made like God I speak not: God says it in me. The prophet cries, in the Psalms, 'Open thy mouth and I will fill it.' Nature lets nothing be empty. If nature acts thus with natural things then open the mouth of thy soul and it must perforce fill with God.—Thirdly, the Eternal Word must be silent in itself. The profoundest happiness lies in the mere beholding of the naked Godhead. If aught speaks in thee God says naught. By creature speaking in thee I mean thou holdest something dear enough for it to bias thee towards good or ill. All creatures are silent in the Godhead. The Trinity is silent in itself. In the Eternal Word the Father is not speaking. In the Eternal Word nothing speaks but absolute essence. Were God's Persons to end he would still subsist as pure being. My happiness lies in seeing God with God. God, speak, I shall hear. Do, I shall suffer. Show in the Eternal Word and I shall see. Let us be still and praise God, etc.

XX

He of Sterngassen said, a pure heart is better than knowledge or love, and how do I know this? he asks. Let us see.

Of loving people numbers have fallen, of clever people numbers have fallen: no pure heart ever fell. 'Using love,' says one of the saints, 'I find God unseizable, using intellect I find him unfathomable, but in the freedom of my pure abstract nature I find God mine in proportion to my detachment.'—We read of a wise man going to a God-lover and asking him how he fared. He answered, 'I am in sore travail, always afraid, ever in dread of losing my love. And the more I love the less faith I have in my love.' He went on and found a God-conner and asked him too how he fared. He said he was always working: 'The more I know the more I find I do not know; the deeper I go the less I understand.' He went on again and found a man pure in heart. Him also he asked how he fared. Quoth he, 'The only thing I can say is that in God I have got all I want.' And by the same token the wise man exclaims, 'I will be still and let God work in me; I will be silent and

hear what God says in me ; I shall take refuge in detachment, so shall I find God more intimate with me.'

He said, I am asked what I mean by putting purity above understanding, above love and above grace. I will tell you. Whatever of good these three things have in them I find all at once in the pure heart and of better quality than as possessed by each one separately. How do I make this out ? See. Love makes God dear to me ; purity makes me dear to God. Understanding makes me see God ; purity makes me like God. Grace makes me God-worthy ; purity unites and puts me on a level with him.

Also he defined what is meant by a pure heart : it will admit nothing at all, it abandons the world. So they praise as beautiful the woman in the story who plucked out her own eyes and took them to her lover, saying, 'Have for thine own that which in me delights thee and let me rest in my pure heart.' That heart is pure wherein there is nothing to discard or to expel, wherein nothing appears to offend the clear eye of the mind.

And he said what a godly man has to do. He has to close his heart and outward senses to external things and his inward senses to all mortal cares. He must turn his whole attention into himself. He must be still and listen to what God is saying in him. He must hoist himself up above himself. He has got to be a mirror of divine ideas, to fill his soul with divine forms. He must see the light in the light, foster the light in the light, become the light in the light. He must have in the world no more than his body. He must begin to explore eternity, must always be breaking fresh ground, always cultivating some new perception.

Further, he described a deiform man as one whose soul is filled with divine forms, all divine forms being formless, he said, and from formless forms flow infinite longings which can in no wise be expressed though three things are wrought by them in the soul : dispassionate love, direct knowledge, enlightenment without end.

He said, one who wants to have all things must set store by none. It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles us but that which comes out, that defiles us.

Pious folks must have threefold discrimination. First, the understanding has to be sufficiently acute to give a clear and detailed view of the part that nature plays in whatever may befall them, so that they may realize it fully and discount it. Next, whatever they may have to do they must always see whether it is right in principle.—Thirdly, their intelligence must be so subtile that they are able to discern, in the case of any inspiration or the very faintest light that is revealed to them, whether it comes from God or from some false spirit.

XXI

He of Sterngassen said too, as the prophet says in the psalter, all creatures ask me, Who is God ? Then I entered into myself and knew that creatures in themselves are nothing but a passing show. I saw that in the Godhead every creature is faultless bliss, and found that the light of God's countenance was formed in me, and realized that endless joy was locked within my breast and that there was in me a diapsalm and unbroken stillness of all interior things and heartfelt sighs to heaven; and my mind was free from images and my spirit free from means and the object of my thought was bared and the person of my mind was changed. There entered into me a me forgot in thee, and my reason was inspired into thee, and by thy Holy Spirit I was led into the ground, wherein the Son is imaged, and I saw there God in God and the Father's nature in the Son and the Son's Person in the Father and the Holy Ghost's Person in the Father and in the Son. Then I had a higher sight, a higher longing (will), a higher understanding. I found in me all things forgotten, my own self forgotten and awareness of thee God alone. There came in me a vision of thy eternity and a sense of thy felicity, and I found myself simply gazing upon thee. I found myself in nature just like thee, I found myself

in nature one with thee, I found myself let into thy eternity and found that all thy bliss thou hadst poured into me. I found myself with thee being thy being and speaking the Word and breathing the Spirit; and in my soul the Father was almighty, the Son all-knowing, and the Holy Ghost all-loving. O Eternal Light of Divine Glory, since thou art in my innermost depths, since thou transcendest all things, be to me *that thou art*, a turning away from all things into the ineffable Good that thou art in thy naked self.

XXII

Unchangeableness and complete detachment from creatures, that sets me nearest to God and to the summit of perfection. Purity makes me all unmindful of things, and by purity God is always kept in me. Purity makes me uniform with God, purity forces me into the inner being of creatures, purity means farewell to all creatures. None but the pure in heart can see God. In purity only is God to be found. Intellect teaches me about things, purity makes me see God. By purity God is made captive in me, purity makes me God-conscious and conscious of naught beside God, purity begets detachment. The pure soul has a light-birth as it were, purity is satisfied with God alone.

XXIII

He of Sterngassen said, I am often asked what our Lady was doing when the angel came to her. Twenty-one things are predicated of her. She was sitting in time untimely. She was sitting, a creature uncreaturely. She was sitting in the body maidenly. Her soul was deiform. Her spirit was contemplating God. Her mind was heavenly calm. Her outward life was altogether lovely. Her soul was generous. To her nothing at all under God was of any account. Her heart was aflame with the truth. Clear consciousness was her school. Heaven was her cell. Divinity was her reading. Eternal truth was her mentor. She had no inclination towards

creatures but was simply bent upon God. She was liberated from creatures and set upon God alone. Her spirit was inspired with the Spirit of God. In body on the earth her spirit was in heaven. She was in the land of freedom. Where lies the land of freedom? In complete detachment from creatures, and in the land of freedom lies the state of purity. She sat in the cell of recollection and dispassion. She sat in the house of godly certitude. She sat in the school of the Trinity and heard what the schoolmaster of truth was saying. In the darkness she saw a light. In the silence she heard a word. In passivity she was aware of activity. Her soul was all the time resting in eternity and abiding in the Godhead and she was satisfied with the divine perfection.

XXIV

It is a saint who says, 'This is sanctity, to know what we were before time and what we are in time and what we shall be after time.' He of Sterngassen has spoken very finely on these three. He said on one occasion, 'He has formed us in him and with him.' He has formed us in him. Mark how he has formed us. We are a light in his brightness and a word in his understanding and a life in his interior nature. Thus he formed us in him before time. Next, what we are now in time. In us is a light into which without ceasing the light of the Godhead is shining. In us is a mind into which without ceasing the Word of the Trinity is speaking. And in us is a spiritual nature wherein without ceasing the life of eternity is working. Thirdly, what we shall be after time. We shall be absorbed into God essentially, confusedly, completely. How shall we be absorbed into God essentially? In seeing, not in being. His being will not be our being, it will be our life, as Christ says, 'To know thee Father and thy Son Jesus Christ, this is eternal life.' He did not say it was eternal being.

Peradventure you will say, But, Sir, if God has implanted

in our souls such nobility, such riches, if the light of his deity is shining in the purity of my soul and the Word of the Trinity is speaking in me and the life of eternity is energizing in my interior nature, then why am I so unaware of it? Thou dost ask me this? But I have already told thee it comes of being so scattered, of behaving just as though ye were unconnected, self-estranged, and reckless of invading creature images. Why are there so many who cannot understand me? I will tell you. Simply because they have not given up their lives to him. When I speak of unity how should he understand me whose heart is all to pieces in multiplicity? And similarly with eternity, I say, how should he understand me who finds his satisfaction in time and temporal things? When I talk of a pure heart how can a person understand me who harbours all and sundry in his inmost soul? For it is not enough to be rid of creatures, having them, we must oust as well their capricious images which so heavily handicap the soul. Alas, alas, if only ye could realize how ye are hindering yourselves and how much of eternal truth ye might understand by dint of application and guarding well the inner man! Ye are afraid of your own selves. Believe me ye might know as much and more than I do. Why is it then that I know more than you of God? Not because of more book-knowledge, book-learning will hardly help at all. The reason is that ye have not as carefully as I have detached and freed yourselves entirely from things. Were ye as dead to things and held them as impermanent as I do then ye would know as much as I know, very likely more. Besides, I left myself not only in pursuit of grace, but also I was minded to arrive at wisdom. I follow my own lights because you see I find I am cognisant of things that are hidden from those who have not made the effort to be free and escaped from the net of the temporal illusion of striving creatures. As well might God consort with devil as join himself to any soul while yet she is not wholly free from fugitive emotions and from creature images. Whenever the soul shall loose her hold and cease to concern herself with time and

temporalities she will be able for great things. You must know that in her works she follows hard upon the heels of God.

Why is it such a number of even learned men can hardly bear that we should set the soul so near to God and credit her with being so like God? It simply means they do not know the exalted lineage of the soul. If they fully realized her high descent they would cavil at the various points of difference they must find between the soul and God.

Will you ask God to help me and protect me in one matter I am greatly exercised about? You must know that I have spent much thought upon it and am still concerned about it more than I care to say or can well tell you, albeit love constrains me, remembering my joy in you.—I wonder and have wondered a long time why the soul cannot speak as powerful a word as the heavenly Father can. According to some doctors it is because in God that is essential which is merely imaged in the soul. She cannot do as the Father can, because she has not gotten it in reality. This explanation does not satisfy me. Other doctors tell us what God is. His being and existence he gets from himself, but the soul is from God, *that* she is, and therefore in her works she will not compare with God. This is quite unconvincing, for the Son too has gotten from the Father all he is and he acts the same as the Father. One short statement, however, yields a clue. It is that the Son is born out of the Person of the Father while remaining in him in essence. As immanent in him he is able therefore to do all the Father does, both as Person and essence. But the soul proceeded from the Person and also from the essence, and since she does not remain in the essence therefore she does not act like the Father. With this explanation I am satisfied to some extent, not altogether.

XXV

'In all things I have sought rest and in nothing have I found it.' She says, I have found rest in nothing but naught. The naught the soul finds rest in is the naked Godhead. Sick

people have fancies for all sorts of things, especially women big with child. And the soul which has conceived and is pregnant with God's Word is full of longings. Sometimes she is longing to be rid of creatures, sometimes to stamp out her own nature, and sometimes she is craving for excursions in the Trinity, but rest she cannot find except in naught. As our Lord says, 'Let thy dwelling be in Jacob.' Jacob signifies a wrestler. He means then that to rest in God man must be always struggling with and overcoming things. If I have overcome myself I have overcome all things. That man has overcome all things whom naught can overcome to make him stoop to imperfection.

As a thing is in its essence so does it act. My soul is deiform in her essence, therefore she is omnipotent and her work is eternal. All God can do she can bear. He can do no more nor less. Our doctors can none of them tell which is the greater, God's power or the soul's capacity. Since, then, I have omnipotence I must never stop till I have gotten all things, less than all being less than I. To the suffering soul beholding God all things are too narrow, too confined, which makes me wonder how a soul who finds the whole of things too small is able to rest in any single creature. Because I am important to myself therefore trivialities are important to me. Were I nothing to myself things would be nothing to me. Seneca the philosopher says, Who fears God everything fears. Who fears not God fears everything. He who fears God is friends with him. To be friends with God is to be on his side. On God's side one can do all things.

By nature things rest when they find their own place. Beasts rest when their wants are satisfied. Each creature rests in its own place. Pick up a stone and throw it in the air, it never rests till it falls back to earth. Why is that? Because earth is its fatherland, air its land of exile. Everything comes to rest in the place where it was born. The place I was born in is the Godhead. The Godhead is my fatherland. Have I got a father in the Godhead? Not only have I got a Father there

but I have got myself. Ere I was in myself I was born in the Godhead. If once God's Word were spoken in me nothing in the world would stop me climbing right up into the Godhead. When anything stays long away from its own place it spoils. Throw a bird into the water and it drowns. Throw a fish into the air, it perishes. The fish is born in water, water is its nature. Being born in God wilt thou live out of God ? Surely then thou diest.

If thy wont is temporal I shall never believe that thou art spiritual. If thy life is spiritual thy wont will be godly contemplation.—Eternal freedom simply means being freed from self.—The soul has a deiform nature, for she is made in the image of God. She has an omnipotent nature, for what God has in eternity in uncreatedness she has in time and creaturely. —Nothing can satisfy me but something that will fill me. The man who is hungry for God has no stomach for aught beside God. If I desire things they are desirable. They are not desirable in themselves. Were I full of God I should care nothing whatever for the world. To respect the world shows want of self-respect. Self-respect betokens despisery of things. Rest is complete loss of motion. Were any creature perfectly immoveable it would be God. God is God in that he is immoveable. Creatures are all of them moveable and restless, therefore I cannot rest except in God. Intelligent creatures rest only in their own (intellectual) activity. What is the end of my activity ? What in God is a doing shall in me be a suffering. What in God is a speaking shall in me be a hearing. What in God is a form shall be a vision in me.

XXVI

In this sermon Meister Eckhart sets out the great benefit of the coming of our Lord: before, all people had to go to hell, but now God is not hard to please, a pure heart is enough.

Ecce dies veniunt, dicit dominus, et suscitabo David germen iustum (*Jer.* 9_{25}). The words of Jeremiah, 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will quicken the true root of

David [and the fruit thereof shall be wise and shall judge justly and bring righteousness on earth].' Solomon says, 'Like water to a thirsty soul are good tidings from a foreign land.' In the matter of his sins man is far from God, so heaven is (to him) a far and foreign land and Jeremiah was a messenger from heaven. St Augustine tells about himself that before he was converted he found himself far away from God in a strange and alien country. It is a lamentable thing for anyone to be away from what he cannot be happy without. If the fairest of the creatures God has made were fetched out of the light in which they stand—and so far as things are standing in the light of God so far they are happy and at ease—suppose, I say, it were God's will, he did so ordain, that they were taken out of the light divine and assigned to any [the least] soul, she would find no pleasure in them, she would be dismayed. More lamentable is the case of one who is away from him apart from whom he cannot be at all. And worst of all to be away from him who is his eternal bliss [and grown infirm so that not by any power of his own can he return to God nor does he know even where he may find him. David bewails this, saying, 'I am far from God, for I am born in sin and am become so frail that by no virtue of my own can I get back to God, withal my sight is gone so that I cannot tell if I encounter him again.' A good man said in John's book, 'One person at variance with another will probably find someone to put matters straight; but being at variance with God who is so high, so unapproachable, none can be found to heal the breach, no man, the noblest of them; more masses are his only hope]. So it was good news the prophet gave, 'Behold the days come, etc.' When the patriarchs realized their parlous state they cried aloud to heaven, and casting them in spirit into God let God in godly wisdom be born [of human nature, (God) who shall save us from our miserable plight]. This message was as good as a drink of cold water to a thirsty soul. Moreover, it is true that God will give his kingdom for a draught of cold water, and this, with a kind heart, is enough, and whoso offers

thanks in eternal love (wherein God was made man), he shall be saved. Man durst not fear the devil nor the world nor his own flesh and our Lord God as well [he need not fear. For] as St Paul explains, 'the Son is given us for advocate, who is the wisdom of his Father, and he will make excuse for all our follies and misdeeds.' St Paul says also, 'He is given to be our champion, to fight our battles for us at all times of need. Though the Father should want to fight against us he would not be able to, for the very power and wisdom which the Father has the Son has just the same, who is specially charged with our defence and has won us much too dearly to want to let us go, withal the Father cannot say him nay since he is his wisdom nor can he fight against him since he is his power. So man need have no fear, he can always boldly go to God.

When man was driven out of paradise God put three keepers [at the gate]. One was angelic nature, another was a flaming sword, the third its being double-edged. Angelic nature stands for purity. [Which man has not got.] When God's Son came on earth, who was his (clear) and flawless mirror, [the face and reflection of his heavenly Father wherein God's will is plainly seen], he broke through the outer guard and brought innocence and purity in[to] human nature upon earth.

The flaming sword stands for divine fiery love without which none can get to heaven. This Christ brought with him and forced the second guard, for with that very love he had loved mankind ere he created him. Jeremiah says, 'God has loved thee with eternal love.'

The third guard, the sharp sword, was human misery. Of this our Lord has shouldered the whole load, as Isaiah says, *vere languores etc.* 'Surely he shall bear our griefs (and carry our sorrows).' He came to earth on purpose to take men's sins upon himself and wipe them out and save mankind. Now heaven is thrown wide. So man can boldly approach God.

One thing more we note in his pronouncement, 'I will quicken the seed of David' (or, the fruit). You remember how at certain times the angel moved the water and it gained

the power to heal the sick. A much more momentous thing was the moving of man's nature in our Lady's womb by the Son of God. By that all human nature has been healed. And it was a greater blessing still that God with (his) own nature did move the waters in (the) Jordan when he was baptized. Then he gave power to all water so that when a person is baptized he is cleansed from all his sins and becomes a child of God. Greatest of all blessings is God's birth and revelation in the soul in spiritual union. Then a man is made more blessed than the body of our Lord Jesus Christ without his soul and without his godhood, any sainted soul being nobler than the mortal body of our Lord Jesus Christ [was].

The interior birth of God in the soul is the final consummation of her happiness, and the bliss of it is more to her than that of our Lord's becoming man in our Lady's womb or than his moving of the waters. Nothing God has ever wrought or done for man is any use at all except as uniting him with God in spiritual union wherein God is born within his soul and the soul is born in God, and to this end has God wrought all his works. Please God this is in store for us. Amen.

XXVII [1]

In this sermon Meister Eckhart shows by argument and by examples how God is born in the soul and the soul is born into God.

In illo tempore missus est angelus Gabriel a deo. '*Ave gratia plena, dominus tecum*' (*Luc.* 1_{26}). St Luke says, 'Then the angel was sent from God.' When? 'In the sixth month' of John the Baptist's being in his mother's womb.

If anyone asks me, Why do we pray, why do we fast, why do we work, why are we baptized, why—most important of all—did God become man? I answer, that God may be born in the soul and the soul be born into God. All the scriptures have been written, God has made the world and all angelic nature in order that God might be born in the soul and the soul be

[1] See also Jostes, Appendix 1, No. 4, and Pfeiffer, I, xxix and xxviii. Büttner's modern German version, vol. ii, No. 1, is very free.

born into God. All cereal nature means wheat, all metal nature means gold, all generation means man. As one philosopher observes, 'We can find no animal without some likeness to man.' At the moment when this word is first conceived within my mind it is an abstract and very subtle thing, it is true word before it is imaged in my thought. Thirdly, it is spoken by the mouth, and then is nothing more than an exterior symbol for the interior word. Even so the eternal Word is spoken within in the heart of the soul, in her innermost, in her purest part, in the head of the soul, her intellect namely: therein happens this birth. Anyone who has merely the hope, the lively conviction of this, will be glad to know how this birth comes about and what conduces to it.

'In the fullness of time God sent his Son,' says St Paul. St Augustine explains what is meant by this fullness of time. 'Where time is no more there is fullness of time. When the day is completed the day is done. And it is of course true that there is no time where this birth befalls, for nothing hinders this birth so much as time and creature. Assuredly time cannot touch either God or the soul by nature. If the soul could be touched by time she would not be soul and if God could be touched by time he would not be God. Further, if time could touch the soul God could never be born in her (and she could never be born in God). For God to be born in the soul time must fall away altogether or she must escape from time by willing or longing.

Another meaning of fullness of time. Suppose someone had the knowledge and the power to sum up in the present now, all the time and the happenings in that time of six thousand years, including everything to come until the end, that would be fullness of time. That is the now of eternity, where the soul in God knows all things new and fresh and pleasing like the ones that are present to me here. I was reading in a little book that, if we did but know it, God still goes on making the world just as he did the first day. Herein is God rich and this is God's kingdom. The soul that God is born in will be lost to

time, she shall escape out of time, and rising up stand staring into the kingdom of God. There wide has no width and broad has no breadth. There the soul knows all things and knows them in perfection. Philosophers speaking of the size of heaven (say it is incredible). Yet the smallest of the powers in my soul is more than heaven wide. To say nothing of the intellect: it is capacious beyond measure. In the head of the soul, in the intellect, therein I am as near a place more than two thousand leagues beyond the seas as (I am) to the spot I stand on now. In this open, this kingdom of God, the soul knows. Nothing escapes her, and there she has nothing to wait for.

'The angel was sent.' According to the masters the angel hosts are countless. They are too numerous for number to contain; their number cannot even be conceived. To one who knows distinction apart from time and number an hundred would be the same as one. Were there an hundred Persons in the Godhead the man who sees distinction apart from time and number would apprehend no more than one. Unbelievers are surprised at this and some unlettered Christians too, nay there are some priests even who know no more about it than a stone. They take (the) three (Persons) like three cows or three stones, whereas anyone who can see in God distinction apart from time and number knows the three Persons are one God.

An angel is a most exalted being. According to the best authorities each of the angels has a whole nature to itself. Imagine a man gifted with everything that men have ever had, have now and ever shall have of power, wisdom and the rest, that man would be a marvel, but he would still be reckoned as no more than one man and far from an angel at that. Similarly every single angel has one entire nature, and one differs from another as one beast does from another of another nature. In this multitude of angels God is rich, and to know it is to realize something of God's kingdom. It proclaims God rich just as a lord is argued rich from the number of his knights. Therefore he is called by us the Lord of Hosts. These hosts

of angels, however exalted they may be, all play their part when God is born in the soul; that is to say, they enjoy, rejoice and delight in the birth. They do none of the work. There is no creaturely activity. God brings about this birth by himself, the angels' work being one of service. Whatever ministers thereto is work of service.

The angel was called Gabriel. He did what he was called. His name was no more Gabriel than Conrad. No one can know an angel's name. Into where the angels bear name no master or mind ever entered. Peradventure he is nameless. Nor has the soul any name. We can no more find the real name of the soul than we can find the proper name for God, in spite of weighty books that are written on it. But where she peers out in her works she is called after them. The carpenter, that is not his name, it is the name he gets from the work of which he is master. And Gabriel is the name he takes from his work of messenger, Gabriel meaning power, energy. In this birth God works powerfully, he energizes. What is all the power of nature for? To bring forth itself. Why is every nature trying to bring forth? In order to re-produce itself. The nature of my father is trying to produce a father in his nature. Since this cannot be it tries to make one exactly like him. Failing this it makes the nearest thing it can, which is a son. And where the power is still weaker or some accident befalls, it makes a yet more different person. Now since there is perfect power in God therefore he makes his match in this birth. What God is in power, in wisdom, in truth, all this he gets into the soul.

St Augustine says, 'What the soul loves she grows like.' By loving things earthly she will grow earthly, and if she loves God does she then, we might ask, become God? Were I to say so it would sound incredible to people of intelligence too poor to understand. St Augustine says, 'It is not I who say so, I refer you to the scriptures, where it says: "I have said, ye are gods."' Anyone possessing something of those riches I was talking of just now—a glimpse, a hope perhaps, or a firm

conviction, will understand quite well. Never was there born anything so near akin, so like, so much the same as God as the soul becomes in this birth. If it is hampered in some way so that she cannot grow exactly like, that is not God's fault. So far as her shortcomings are repaired he will make her like himself. No carpenter can build a solid house out of rotten wood. That is no fault of his, the fault is in the wood. And so with God's work in the soul. Were the lowest of the angels to take shape or be born in the soul this whole world would count for naught—seeing that in one lone angelic spark there grows and thrives and shines everything in the world—but this birth is the work of God himself. No angel can do anything to help, nothing but work of service.

'Ave.' That means, free from woe. Freedom from creature means freedom from sorrow, freedom from hell, and those who possess and like creatures least have the least sorrow. It is a favourite saying with me, He who loves the world least possesses it most. None owns the world like the man who has left it. What, think ye, makes God God? His freedom from creatures. He is unmindful of them in time. In time is creature (and sin) and death. These are in a sense akin, so whenever the soul escapes out of time she escapes from sorrow and pain, aye, hardship is then her joy. No imaginable happiness, joy, loveliness, or bliss is any happiness at all compared with the bliss of this birth.

'Full of grace.' The smallest work of grace is of more exalted nature than any of the angels. St Augustine says, any act of grace that is wrought by God, the conversion of a sinner for example, and making him into a good man, is a thing of greater moment than God's creating a new world. It is just as easy for God to make the heavens and the earth turn round as for me to turn an apple in my hand. Where grace is present in the soul she is as pure, as like, as much akin to God—grace being free from activity—as in this birth, wherein, as I was saying, there is no activity. Grace does no work. St John gave never a sign. The work of an angel in

God is so exalted, no master or mind can conceive it. But from that work there falls a chip, as a chip might fall in building a house: a flash where, as his lightest task, the angel sets the heavens rolling. Everything in the world lives, grows and thrives because of this. I sometimes speak of two founts—perhaps that sounds strange, still we must use such words as fit our thoughts—one fount, whence grace springs, where the Father brings forth his only Son: at this point starts grace which issues in this same stream. The other fount is the one in which creatures flow out of God; it is as far from the fount where grace springs as heaven is from the earth. Grace does no work. Ordinary fire as existing in its nature does not burn and is quite harmless; the heat of the fire is what burns, but this heat, even, in the fire-nature, will not burn and does no damage. Truly the heat which is present in the fire and the actual fire-nature are heaven and earth apart. Grace does no work. It is too fine for that. Work is as alien to grace as heaven to earth. A being in, being established in, being one with God, this is grace—and God too, for that follows.

'God with thee.' This is the birth. Let no one think it is beyond him. What matters the hardship to me if he does the work? All his behests I can easily obey. He may tell me to do whatever he likes, it will trouble me not in the least; it is all quite simple and easy so long as he provides me with sufficient grace. Some people say they have not got it, and I answer: I am sorry, but art thou longing for it?—'No.' Then I am sorrier still. Though we may not have it we can at least desire it. David cries, 'I have longed to desire thy righteousness.' Let us long for God until he is pleased to be born in us. So help us, etc.

XXVIII

Here Meister Eckhart teaches that when any soul is given the name Jesus this is always done on the eighth day.

Post dies octo vocatum est nomen eius Jesus (*Luc.* 2_{21}). 'On the eighth day his name was (called) Jesus.' The name Jesus

is not given except by inspiration of the Holy Breath. A venerable doctor lays it down that 'in whatever soul the name of Jesus shall be spoken this will be done on the eighth day.' On the first day he yields his own will to God's will and lives for that only. The next day there are glimmerings of the celestial fire. The third day corresponds with the tortured soul's unceasing quest for God. The fourth day all the powers of the man are fixed on God. According to one authority, 'When the soul is touched by eternal things she is moved, and by this motion she is warmed and by the warmth she is expanded and made very receptive of God.' On the sixth day the soul is united to God. The seventh day God receives the soul. The eighth day is the enjoyment of God, and then the name Jesus is given to the child.

XXIX

In this discourse Meister Eckhart shows that when room is made for God then, where there is peace, God comes to the soul.

Angelus domini apparuit etc. (*Matt.* 1_{20}). 'The angel appeared to Joseph while he slept, and said to him, Take the child, etc.' A wise man says the scriptures are in meaning much like running water which overflows at times and is used to fill the dykes and for baptizing yet flows on all the while. St Augustine says, 'It is well that the scriptures should be obscure in meaning, so that the highest truth is not discovered at first glance.' We find many happy and profitable sayings which are consistent with the highest truth, Moses' statement, for example, that there is water over us as well as underneath. Who can tell? Pious men enquire why God made man last, after he had made all creatures. Possibly the fundamental reason and true explanation is that he made in man the epitome of creaturely perfections. Thus the Holy Trinity took counsel when about to make mankind, and said, 'Let us make man in our image.' From which it would appear that this image of the Holy Trinity is innate in the soul. Then, again, angelic nature, which she has in common with the angels, as well as all creaturely likeness and perfection, is natural to man, so that

God beholds, sees mirrored, in mankind, his own perfection added to that of all creation, proof positive that man ranks highest among creatures. Moses made four books, very useful ones; afterwards he made a fifth, the smallest and the best which he called the truth of all the scriptures. This God and Moses had put in the ark. St Augustine, too, made many books. Finally he also made a little book in which were written all the things that in the others people could not understand. This, his favourite one, he always kept at hand. And so it is with man: God made him for a handbook which he dips into and toys with and takes pleasure in. That man commits a heinous sin who hampers this saving practice. On the day of judgment all creatures will clamour loudly against anyone who does so.

This goes to show that after Herod's death Joseph did right to go back to the land where those who hindered God had made room for him. Even so must sins make room for God if the soul is to be in the right state for God to dwell in. According to St John, 'The true light came into the world and the world received it not.' Meaning to say, it found no place to stay in and was not received on that account. It has been said, 'If with pure heart thou wouldst receive and know thy God, then kill out pleasure, hope and fear.'—This is the first step towards making room for God. The second one is peace, which was reigning in the land where God was born. This is shown by the fact that everyone belonged and was subject to one rule. *Hic nota historiam.* I prove it too by those three kings who came from distant lands. Perfect peace has to reign in the soul. There is real peace where the lowest is subject to the highest. We pray, etc.

XXX

Here Meister Eckhart sets forth what Christ teaches us in the four knowledges.

Sedebat Jesus doceus in templo (*Luc.* 19_{47}). The gospel says, Christ sat in the temple and taught. His sitting suggests calm,

and a person who is sitting down is more apt to consider serious things than one who is walking or standing about. Sitting symbolizes rest, standing activity, and going restlessness. So it behoves the soul to sit, most patient and humble of creatures, and she shall enter into rest and peace. The peace she gets in a light. The light is given her in a stillness wherein she sits, abides. Albertus (says), 'Teachers sit down while they are teaching, because reclining lets the heavy humours, impure blood that is to say, mount into the brain and dull the understanding. But while a man is sitting his bad blood will flow down, and lighter humours rising to his head, *memoria* is illumined.' This explains why Christ sat in the temple, *i.e.* in the soul.

The next thing is the 'teaching.' What does he teach? He teaches understanding, the proper uses of it; for whatever be the teacher, it teaches after its own nature. Christ is understanding, so he teaches us understanding.

Christ had four kinds of knowledge and wisdom. The first was divine. Therewith he knew the things in the eternal providence, not only what is and what shall be but also all God could do if he would. With this light he could see into people's hearts, and such acts as are proper to God he did in virtue of this knowledge. These things were possible to Christ in the wisdom which is God.—The second knowledge of Christ is creature, that (beatific) knowledge namely which was poured into his soul when she was created, and it is supernatural. In it she enjoyed God and saw God in his essence. In this knowledge he neither waxed nor waned. This knowledge gave him power to know all that God had ever done or was going to do, but nothing that concerns his (own) infernal nature: that she knows nothing about. This light is creature albeit supernatural to the soul.—The third (infused or angelic) knowledge he has in common with the angels who have in them universal ideas of things. Dionysius says, 'When God created the angels he gave them universal species, and these they have innately.' So has Christ's soul innately the form or exemplar of all things which he has given her; not that he is himself that form any

more than the seal which gives its form to the wax is identical with it. In this knowledge he neither lost nor gained. By this means she was able to know all present happenings but not future ones, just as an angel has no knowledge of things to come unless it be revealed to him; it is not his by nature.—The fourth knowledge he had was of sensible things. What the senses receive from without is subtly conveyed to the image-maker (imagination), where mental insight falls upon it. In this case he progresses like ourselves. 'There is growth in the powers of the mind,' as Doctor, or Brother, Thomas says.

Let us see now what he teaches us in these knowledges. The first knowledge, which is God, whence proceeded all things, in this he tells us how we shall and must return and restore all things to their original source. This happens in the man in whom multiplicity is all gathered up and the whole raised into God, into the first cause, God namely. When a man has reached the point of finding he is one with God, then, not till then will he restore all things to their original source. St Bernard cries, 'Lord, what is man that thou hast loved him so?' 'Blessed is he in whom all manifold things are reduced to unity.'—This is what he taught us in the knowledge which is God. What does he teach us in the knowledge which is super-natural? He teaches us to transcend what is natural. We must first overcome our own senses, thoughts and opinions based upon them. Up, noble soul, put on thy jumping shoes, understanding and love, and leap the workings of thy powers: leap thine own understanding, the three hierarchies and the three heavens as well as the light which is energizing thee, and spring into the heart of God, into his hiddenness, wherein thou art hidden from all creatures. This is what he teaches us in super-natural knowledge. As St Paul says, 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'—Then what does he teach us in the natural knowledge which he has in common with the angels who have general ideas in them? The soul too has the power of grasping generalities. And she ought to dwell in herself, seeing truth comes from within and not from without. 'O

Lord,' St Augustine exclaims, 'what numbers have gone out of themselves to look for the truth and have never come back into themselves again!' They never found the truth simply because God is the core and centre of the soul.—This is what he teaches us in this supernatural knowledge. What does he teach us in the progressive knowledge? He teaches us the conduct of the outward man. This conduct is arrived at by self-examination, for to know oneself is better than knowledge of all created things.

Christ taught them. Who are the ones he teaches? The simple ones. Who are really simple? Those who are harmless and never deceive but are at the same time never deceived: these are really simple. In this true simplicity help us, etc.

XXXI

In this sermon Meister Eckhart explains how God calls the soul to him by the creation of all creatures, and about the reward.

Voca operarios et redde illis mercedem suam (*Matth.* 20_8). In St Matthew it says, 'Call the labourers and pay them their hire.' By this Lord who calls the labourers into his vineyard is meant our Lord who calls all people to him in two ways. First by the creation of all creatures, which he has made so noble and so fair; and secondly by death, death which falls so heavy on the sinner's heart. About the first a master comments thus, 'God made the world for man, and all things in the world, and mankind for himself, and the body he has (given) to the soul God has overcome and so made all creatures to show forth his glory to the soul while he is so intent on knowing how to attract the soul and lure her to his love that, everything in heaven and earth forgot, he only seeks to find out in what way each soul may best be brought to him.' (He) has made all kinds of creatures so that his glory may be shown in many different ways, albeit no creature did he make without something painful, some semblance of hell, for creatures are all messengers, beckoning to God, since they all are proclaiming the glory of God.

Two things God tries on creatures. The first one, comfort, pleasure, he uses as a bait for man, while giving him to understand that it is at its height in God; and pain is the other thing he lays upon a creature, for instance, on a man who for the sake of rank or pleasure is careless about God. Marvellous as the minds of men are the wonderful ways of God. Where one is lured by pleasure another must be driven by sickness and misfortune, witness the astonishing conversion of St Paul. On his way to persecute the Christians God struck him down and encompassed him with his light; and St Augustine, when he was converted, the very day of it, could not get over his delight in the wonderful lure God had laid for his soul, to convert her. God, who is one, has parcelled himself out among all creatures, so that the soul can in no way turn from God to creature without finding his likeness therein. No sinner would ever revel in sin were not God's likeness somehow present there, as honour, comfort, pleasure. And hence it is that many a man is willing to give up both goods and friends while honour he refuses to forgo, his honour which lies nearest to his heart, and in this he follows God most closely, for God says, 'Mine honour will I give to none.' As the commentary on the Psalter says, 'No one is willing to sacrifice his honour to save the honour of his friend.'

There are three reasons why the soul can get no satisfaction out of creatures. In the first place they are partial: drink enough is not food or clothes enough; each will, in its own way, suggest the other and give a further hint at God, but there is no satisfaction in them. Then, again, creatures being mortal will wear out and fall into decay, so there is no progressing in them. The longer I gaze at a white sheet or at the light of the sun the more tired and dim becomes my sight. No creature was ever so noble or so fair but looking at it long was wearisome. Spiritual perception, on the other hand, goes on increasing without end. The more I know of spiritual things the readier and quicker is my mind to take in more.—Thirdly, God's gift to the soul was not made from the vessel

she flowed out of; no joy, no boon God could bestow, unless it came out of the vessel which God is himself, would the soul ever relish or take any pleasure in. God is nothing but pure being, while creature is from nothing and has gotten being from that same divine being, so it stands to reason that the soul gets no enjoyment out of creature which is another vessel. The draught, however rare and fine, if drunk out of a dirty cup will be the baser for it. And that is why, with any gift or honour God may give, unless it is given in himself it is of no value.

According to one authority the Father has a Son and a Holy Spirit and through these two he has stooped down to man. Also, we know that heaven is immeasurably vaster than this earth. The angels in heaven are many more in number than all the men on earth. And doctors declare that the angels are mostly manifesting God, so he must be greatest of all. Daniel saw a thousand thousand serving him and ten hundred thousand thousand round about him, while God, seemingly forgetting all this lordly train, was giving the whole of his attention to a man, to capturing his love. 'Woe unto him,' says the Lord, 'who does not heed my call.' This refers, in the first place, to God's calling forth creatures in the creation.

Secondly, he calls by death; surely and bitterly it falls upon the sinner's heart. The scriptures say, 'Alas, O Death, how bitter is the thought of thee to those in pursuit of worldly pleasure.' But to the good it is very sweet and joyful, simply the passage from death into life; for man a very good bargain, and the good man does get a rare bargain by dying: he exchanges his pain for eternal delight. Suppose one knew a herb was to be had and whoever kept it by him would never grow old or fall sick, that herb would be worth its weight in gold. And such is death. Always having it in mind prevents a man from growing old in sin. Solomon says, 'Thinking on thy end thou shalt never sin.'

In the third place, we shall have our reward, according to his words, 'Summon the labourers and give them their hire.'

No one need be anxious at our Lord's ordering the labourers to be paid. If a man is sick or old and incapable of bodily exertion let him confine himself to inward spiritual works, which are better and more important in God's eyes than outward actions; good-will and love to God, to wit, for these he is rewarded. God lures us with rewards as sheep which man would put elsewhere are lured by tender green. God has promised us reward; he has not said what the reward will be. To tell what the reward will be would cost God all his power, for all God is and can is the reward.

I say, if all souls with their powers were one single soul she would be unable to receive nor could she bear the due reward of the smallest act ordained by God in his eternal love: she would be undone and would dissolve and flow away. How then can the soul receive it all, all that God is, except by being raised above herself and above all creatures to a divine condition? In that way she can. Also, the reward might stale with age, since it lasts for ever. But God has found for this a secret (? heavenly) cure, that of self-renewal, and thereby has brought eternity into time and taken time into eternity with him: as the Son pours into eternity creatures are all poured back in him. The Son is ever being born, all at once and all the time, and creaturely desire and attainment all gathered to a head in him is presented to the soul unceasingly and new. It follows that his birth to-day is just as new as when it first began. Of the soul's reward being given thus in a new vessel, fresh and perfect and keeping fresh and perfect without end, of this I will say nothing except, may it be ours. So help us God. Amen.

XXXII

'Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping.' In this sermon Meister Eckhart tells of Mary Magdalene seeking our Lord and teaches that to find him the soul needs six qualifications.

'Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping' (*John* 20_{11}). It was a wonder that in such sore distress she could weep at all.

Love was the reason of her standing, sorrow of her weeping. She stepped forward and looked into the tomb. Seeking one dead man she found two living angels. Origen says, 'She stood. Why did she stay when the apostles had fled?' She had nothing to lose: all she had she had lost with him. When he died she died too. When they buried him they buried her soul with him, so she had nothing to lose.

She went on. Then he met her. She thought he was the gardener, and said, 'Where hast thou laid him?' In her anxiety about him she gave no answer to his question, only, 'Where hast thou laid him?' Those were her words. Then he showed her plainly who he was. Had he declared himself at once, while she was in the throes of longing, she would have died of joy. If the soul knew when God was coming to her she would die of joy; and if she knew when he was leaving her she would die of grief. She knows not when he comes or when he goes: well does she know when he is with her. As it is said, 'His coming and his going are concealed; his presence is no secret, for he is the light and light is by nature revelation.'

Mary sought God and God alone; that is why she found him: because she wanted God and nothing else. The soul in search of God, to her all creatures mean pain. She was pained at seeing the angels: and to the soul in quest of God all things must count for naught. For the soul to find God she will need six qualifications: first, what before was sweet to her she (now) finds bitter; next, her soul becomes too cramped for her, she is not able to contain herself; third, she wants nothing but God; fourth, no one but God can console her; fifth, she puts no trust in mortal things; sixth, she has no peace of mind till he is back with her again, *etc.*

XXXIII

Here Meister Eckhart's theme is the state the soul has to be in to receive divine light and how God brings forth its twelve fruits in the soul.

Cum sero factum esset etc (*Joh.* 20_{19}). 'At eventide, at close of day, (when the doors were shut) where the disciples were

assembled, God came in.' When the day of earthly pleasures is drawing to its close, when the eventide of mortal things descends upon the soul, then, her powers being assembled and held in, the light of universal truth illuminates the soul. Man has to die to sin and to every occasion of sin. Thereafter he has to die to nature, for as he is nothing of himself he may seek nothing for himself but only God's glory. Then, being God's own, God can lustily do his own work in the soul. Adam was wholly God's own before he fell; his will was in perfect harmony with God's, so that the divinity, shining through his will into his lowest powers, kept them from acting except as ordered by the will: God was doing his own work there, coming and going as he pleased in that soul. As Christ said, 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth and to Jerusalem,' or, in other words, 'I work in the soul that dwells in peace, in her I am given the power to do my own work.'

That which does its own work will work lustily, as the Holy Ghost does in the soul. What does he do? (He brings forth) twelve fruits which dispose men to God and good living. The first three lead men to God: love, which raises a man above impermanent things and sets him in God whom he loves, for the soul which is wrapped in the fire of true love, her perishable part will be surely burnt away in that amiable fire.—The second fruit is spiritual joy, outcome of pure consciousness and a great encouragement to virtue generally, since it lifts a man above himself. The soul rejoices at its coming.—The third is peace of mind, and this makes God dwell in the soul.

The next three govern a man's conduct towards his fellow-Christian. The first is kindness, wishing with all his heart for everyone's happiness. The second is honesty, treating his neighbour as himself. The third is gentleness, behaving to people so as not to cause trouble.

The third three fruits equip a man for future sufferings. The first is patience, docility under the burden of suffering; not like a horse which flags before the journey's end under the load it has to carry. The second is long-suffering, not seeking a

way out of suffering. The third is good temper that no trial can embitter or disturb.

The fourth three fruits pertain to self-control. The first is temperance, the second continence, and the third perfection is, never taking so much of anything but that one could take more, thus desire ever keeps sober.

XXXIV

In this discourse Meister Eckhart enumerates and discusses three dignities of our Lady: first that of her birth, next that of her holy life on earth, and thirdly the dignity of being God's mother.

Que est ista que ascendit quasi aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol? (*Cant.* 6_9). In the Book of Love it is written, 'Who is she that rises like the dawn rising, lovely like the moon, chosen like the sun?' Here we note three nobilities or dignities of our Lady: first, her birth, referred to when he says, 'she rises like the dawn rising.' The second dignity, her holy life on earth, he speaks of as 'lovely like the moon.' The third, her being God's mother answers his description, 'elect (or chosen) like the sun.'

The first, likening her to the dawn, suggests to me two facts: one, that in this dawn there is both light and darkness; the other, that it is the ending of the night and the beginning of the day. This latter is true of the birth of our Lady, for it meant the end of woe and the birth of joy to those of old, since before that time there was nothing they could do to get to heaven. But now our Lord is satisfied with very little. He will give his heavenly kingdom for a drink of cold water. That, with a pure heart, is enough. 'Blessèd are the pure in heart,' Christ says. He makes no mention of gross, external, corporal acts. And St Bernard cries, 'Would to God we longed for Christ as much as those of old did for his coming,' for with mortal things there is more pleasure in the thought than in the thing itself, but the realization of spiritual things is beyond all expectation. To think of that old longing is enough to make one weep.

The second one goes deeper. It too refers to the birth of our

Lady. That this dawn is made up of both light and darkness betokens that our Lady was conceived in sin, her body and her soul were united in original sin, and directly afterwards (*i.e.* after animation) she was purified by the Holy Ghost and was born holy, and therefore do we celebrate her birth. Herein we are shown the perfect(ion) of the body of our Lord, for he never made mere creature so noble as that, nor would he make one so noble that soul and body were united therein or could be. True, God means the soul to see and hear what is not God, but he would not have her love anything but him, for he has made her for union with himself. He has lavished truth on creature, but she is not truth itself. And yet in many ways truth does pertain to creatures, in the same sense that God is truth itself, thus six is more than two to them, and so on. Did the soul find any creature which was truth itself she would stay therein. As our Lady says, 'In all things I have sought rest.' And Noë sent forth the dove from the ark, *i.e.* the rational soul, which can in fact find no rest in creatures. So she returns to her maker, just like the dove to the ark. *In cantico* the soul is called a dove. By nature the soul loves nothing but good. The fact is, every man, if he is really sensible, will find he loves nothing but perfect good, and that is why God has not given perfect good to any creature. If the soul found perfect good in creature she would unite with it. God knows well that love is a unifying power: what she wholly loves she unites with, and this God does not grudge to any creature, for love takes a man out of himself and settles him in what he loves. St Mary Magdalene's soul was united with the dead body of Jesus Christ rather than with her own. According to St Augustine, 'The soul is rather where she loves than where she is giving life.' And St Paul declares, 'I live yet not I, Christ liveth in me.' All creatures are crying aloud to man, 'Thou lookest for truth and goodness which we are not: seek God, he is both truth and goodness.' Man is always searching for holiness and happiness. Satisfaction, perfection, does not belong to creature. One leads on to another, food to drink and drink to clothes,

etc. In all these things we are allowed to taste the joys of the perfect good in God. St Augustine says, 'Are ye seeking, then look in God.' (God) is the end of creature, or the soul could never have full satisfaction in God, or peace. In God the soul will have all perfection at once; if any of it were outside God she would want to have that as well: she would forget the most for the least and pay the penalty. St Augustine says, 'It is arrant nonsense that the soul is without him who is everywhere, that she is without him without whom she cannot be, that she loves not him apart from whom she cannot love at all.' I say, and it is true, God can no more escape the soul than he can escape himself. So far as she can know him and is ready to receive him he is obliged to give himself to her, aye and to every creature just as much as each can take of him and is his likeness. Here I stand, and if a number of mirrors were held in front of me the reflection of my face would be cast therein; I could no more avoid it than I could avoid myself. The clearer the mirror the better the likeness. Thus one can always recognize his presence in a creature. 'Old new good,' cries St Augustine, 'why have I been so long in finding thee! Old, for thou art eternal; new, for thou art ever full of life.' Also, he says, does St Augustine, 'I was seeking thee and found myself away from thee in a land of unlikeness: not very far, for thou art everywhere, and not that I was hid from thee since all things are within thy ken, but I was shrouded in unlikeness and failed to recognize thee.'

So much for the first point: our Lady arose 'like the dawn.' The second is, 'fair as the moon.' In two ways our Lady resembles the moon, the lowest of the planets and the smallest all but one which is smaller still and stands for Christ who was most abject in humility. Next to him comes Mary. St Bernard says, 'The chastity of our Lady was acceptable to God, but humility made her God's mother.' The other way is (this): the moon gives more light than other stars because it is lower than the other planets are, and this suggests the perfect compassion of our Lady, for with a waxing moon creatures come

more alive and stronger than those conceived when the moon is on the wane. Then as to earth. This is the least of all the elements as well as being the basest. Each one of them is ten thousand times greater than the other: water and air and fire. The earth floats in mid-heaven because all the stellar power which runs into the other elements goes through them, whereas upon the earth alone the powers of all the different stars can meet, because of the fixity of earth [1] which does not circulate like the other elements. That is why the power of light produces such incredible effects on earth. So with our Lady: every perfection God could possibly give creature she has received.

By the same token we should know what persons our Lord is with. We may know it by two signs, compassion and genuine humility; but many a man fancies himself humble who is far from being so, while one who weens himself the basest, the vilest among creatures receives all good and perfect things wrought by our Lord in creatures. The other sign is compassion which is shown . . . [2] if someone else has eyeache it matters not to me, for it is not my eye; only so far as I am one with him does it affect me too. But supposing I am God's rather than my own, then if my eye is painful it will not pain me. Why? Because it is not mine. And so with all my worries, they will not worry me since I am not my own. St Augustine says, 'Our Lord behaves as if he took more pleasure in our happiness than we do ourselves and felt more sorrow for our pain.'

The third dignity of our Lady he expresses in the words 'chosen like the sun.' The sun is a light bearer; it is not the light itself, it only contains it and pours it into all creatures, and no creature is born or completed without the help of its light. It does not shine by night, but pours its light into the stars. It is called the chief light-bearer because of its profound effect on precious stones as well as many other things upon

[1] It was not till 1530 that Copernicus proved in his *De Revolutionibus* that the earth travels round the sun.

[2] MS. illegible.

the earth; hence the virtues that we find in stones. And she is a light-bearer, for she brought us the true light into the world. We beseech our Lord, *etc.*

XXXV

Here Meister Eckhart tells of two kinds of suffering. By one kind here in time we earn reward. In the other we receive our reward in heaven, in the passive intellect.

Non sunt condignæ passiones huius temporis ad futuram gloriam quæ revelabitur in nobis (*Rom.* 8_{18}). 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to compare with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' St Augustine comments, 'they are unworthy,' as though one said to another, 'what you say is not true'; if he said, 'you say truly,' that would be confirmation. They are not worthy. The apostles left the *concilio* rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer for God's sake. The good and virtuous man would rejoice to merit any suffering for God. To anyone who has a lively sense of God and is consumed with the fire of love the world appears not worth a straw. St John says *in Apocalypse*, 'Sell all thou hast and buy fiery gold,' that is, love, for he who has this has all things. The right good man, man as he is by rights, how readily, how gladly he will suffer pain, purgatory, anything for God. This none can see, but he who has it knows. 'I thirst,' Christ said, at the end of all his sufferings. He meant that he was ready to suffer more still for mankind.

So much for the sufferings of this world: there is suffering of another world. Our life is divided into two, the one is working and the other suffering. Working we earn our wages, suffering we receive them. No one knows the trouble that God takes to draw the soul. Our earnings come from working, but that is poor and meagre, so he pays not by the work but by the suffering. Always our best he goes by, for we can do but little and suffer a great deal, give little and take much. A man can take a pound who cannot give a penny. And much he takes more readily than little: the bigger and better

the thing the more gladly it is received. By rewarding us according to our suffering he can give us a great deal since we are liable to have so much. Suffering is destitute, doing has something. I can do nothing I have not got, unless it is in me, but suffering has nothing, it is bare. A philosopher says, 'Where one is made out of twain, one must needs go out of itself, must die in itself, that it may be changed into its fellow and be one therewith.' Before a sense can perceive it has to be free from perceptions: this eye must be without colour before it can recognize colour, and the ear free from sound before it can hear, and so on with each of the senses; and so far as a sense goes out of itself so far is it able to take in more and unite with what it takes in. In the same way the soul must have done with herself before she can take God in, then she becomes united with God and does all his godly work with him. This was the reward Christ craved when, after all his travail and his sufferings, he cried, 'Father, I pray thee that they may be one as we are one.' Nor is God satisfied with suffering only. The recompense being sure God makes it easy for us, permitting that we acquire merit and obtain reward by willingly and gladly bearing hardship in his name.

The sufferings of this time are not worthy, they are unworthy to compare with the glory which shall be discovered in us. 'Discovered.' If it is discovered in us it must be there already. All the powers which overlay the soul will have to fall away if God is to be found and made manifest in us. When God created the soul he planted himself in her and was covered over: this is the vineyard of God wherein he himself is the plant. Directly he made this nature, even before he had made her, he was ready to plant himself therein.

No man can see God. St Philip said, 'Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.' We hymn our Lady, 'Show thyself, that thou art mother; if thou art God's mother, show us, for so doing thou mayst help us; show us that thou art our mother,

for as our mother thou wilt help us ; show thyself mother since thou hast a child,' for they go together. A mother must have a child. 'Show us the Father.' And a father must have a child. These are dependent on each other : there is no having one without the other. He who knows the Father knows the Son, since all that is gotten in the Father is begotten in the Son. To know him we must be cnildren : being children we are of course heirs.

Happiness lies in knowing God, not from the outside as we look at things : what we see outside us in separation, none of that is God. God-consciousness is life streaming out of the essence of God and the soul, for God and the soul have one being, are one in essence, and all activities flow out of God so that they still remain in him. The soul knows God where she is one in and with the essence of God. True happiness this, having life and being with God, and God-knowledge is that wherein all other knowing and being has faded away. The soul is not aware of herself or other things, only of herself in God and God in her, all things in him ; everything in God she knows with him, and with him she is doing all his works. There is nothing, she knows nothing, but herself in God and God in her

The very first power to spring up in the bare ground is pure perception. Issuing bare it is instantly clothed ; covered up ; yet therein it falls on pure being. Straightway it draws a sheath round itself, truth, to wit. This recognizes the true. But will will have nothing save what makes for . . .[1] good or seems good.

He says, 'which shall be discovered in us.' 'In us.' The word 'us' stands for pure being. For us to reach the point at which this glory is revealed in us the soul must be divested of hope, fear, sadness, pleasure—all contingent things. Then God in turn reveals himself to her and gives himself to her with all he can.—Next, we must look within, not without, for, says St Paul, 'The Kingdom of God is within you.—Thirdly, in the

[1] MS. illegible.

very innermost where he is somewhat unveiled, there peradventure we may see him face to face. So help us, *etc.*

XXXVI[1]

Here the venerable Meister Eckhart talks of two kinds of wisdom and two kinds of happiness which result therefrom, *i.e.* from divine wisdom and from temporal wisdom.

Beatus homo qui invenit sapientiam (*Prov.* 3_{13}). There are two kinds of wisdom, and two kinds of happiness which come from wisdom. One wisdom is temporal, where man takes himself as a creature of time and can adapt himself to it: the art, as it were, of avoiding misfortune and profiting by the occasion. Anybody good at this becomes a wealthy man and is said to be blest with worldly wisdom. But worldly wisdom is a bar to eternal wisdom. Our God has given the soul two sets of powers so that she may serve him with the lower powers in time and with the higher ones in eternity. One philosopher says, 'The soul is a point, a corner, where time and eternity collide; not that the soul is made of eternity or time, she is a nature made from naught between them both.' If she were made of time she would be mortal, if of eternity she would be unchangeable. Augustine (says), 'The soul is descended from a most noble heavenly naught; better our whole life were given to the search than that we (n)ever find it.' The soul must be noble to withstand the assaults of both eternity and time. Yielding to temporal things she becomes unstable; holding to eternity she grows strong and steady, and by fortitude and steadiness she triumphs over changing things.

The other wisdom is eternal, and this wisdom is a well-spring of divine illumination, a fount of divine truth, and in this wisdom man finds eternal happiness. One who is minded to attain this wisdom will need humility and industry and a penetrating passivity. No activity is so perfect but it hinders recollection. The hearing of the mass permits of recollection

[1] See also Jostes, No. 73, which is rather fuller.

more than the saying of it does. A celebrant over-much intent on recollection is liable to make mistakes. The best way is to try and concentrate the mind before and afterwards, but when actually saying it to do so quite straightforwardly. And poverty too goes with divine wisdom. Poor to some purpose is the man who beggars himself of all the things which are not God.

Mark next which people it is that divine wisdom comes to. Solomon says it is to 'her who opens her mouth to wisdom.' The mouth means the highest power of the soul, where the soul is laved by God. This power ought always to be directed upwards and opened to godly consolation, and what it gets from God it pours into the lower powers. If she could grasp or take in God with her lower powers God would be demeaned, brought down to our understanding; we are not able to lay hold of God with anything pertaining to this life. One philosopher says, 'Whatever we can say of God God is'; another one declares 'God is nothing that we can express,' and both of them are right. According to Augustine, 'God is power, wisdom and goodness,' (whereas) Dionysius says, 'God is above wisdom and above goodness; he is above anything we can express.' In the Scriptures God is given many names, and for this there are two reasons: one, because his majesty cannot be expressed in any words at all, he is above and beyond nature, possessing as he does an unnatured nature. Sometimes they say he is a power at other times a light. He transcends all light. They call him this or that because he is not really any of these things. If his grandeur could be realized by dint of any words, these names would be carefully concealed. He who knows God best denies most to him, as we can see with a ship. Suppose I wanted to describe a ship to someone who had never seen one and I said, it is not like a stone nor like a blade of grass. At once I should have told him something about the ship. Two learned men were at their prayers. One besought our Lord by his power and his wisdom, the other one said, 'Hush, thou dost dishonour God. God is far above aught

that we can say; were God not so lenient and had the saints not given and God accepted it from them I would never dare to give him praise in words.' From this reverent knowledge a reverent fear is gotten in the soul, and in this fear God is sown in the soul and the soul dies in God. As our Lord says, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it brings forth no fruit.' This death the soul dies in the intuition of God, which she feels in herself and which makes to stink in her nostrils all things which are not God: God so pours himself out to her in grace and takes root in faith, abiding in love. St N(icolaus) has proved how good, how excellent, a bargain it is to give up all for wisdom. St Elizabeth joyfully resigned her kingdom to be poor. It is recorded of her that, 'Her light did not go out at night,' meaning that in times of trouble she could always see her way. So shall her light shine in eternal life. However perfect a man is, the loss of any temporal possession will trouble and upset him. There is no doubt that anyone who suffers loss against his will and bears it patiently merits more reward than would be his due for giving willingly to our Lord God, for so he would be doing his own will. But by resignation he is giving both his will and his goods to God. If anyone is found impatient of misfortune his naughtiness appears as pain, the man behaving like any copper penny: while not lying in the fire it has a silver sheen, but once it gets into the fire it shows that it was copper. God has tried the saints by pain till, perfect in all the virtues, they shine here in the might and in eternal life for ever.

The third (thing) is how to taste divine eternal wisdom. Four things make for this. The first is likeness, making ourselves like God in clearness, as glass and transparent things are to the sun. The second thing is divine light which shines through the clear soul like the sun through glass or water. The third is union, this comes from likeness, as light from light. The fourth is measure, God being commensurate to the soul. But God cannot be diminished or increased, for he is measureless and motionless. The soul then must be lifted and

enlarged, for she is small and moveable; she has to be raised above herself and widened somewhat for God's infinitude. We pray, *etc.*

XXXVII

Meister Eckhart tells in this sermon how an angel shows himself to man and the soul and what state the soul has to be in if grace is to work there.

Elizabeth pariet tibi filium et vocabis nomen eius Johannem (*Luc.* 1_{13}). 'Elizabeth shall bear a son, and he shall be called John.' This was said by the angel when he appeared to Zacharias. An angel can appear in two ways, (first) in bodily guise, this he gets from the elements.

An angel can normally cause to appear within the hour a tree which would take years to grow from seed. Human nature changes food into flesh and blood, much more then is it possible that by the power of God bread and wine should be changed into God's body.—Secondly, an angel manifests himself in the likeness of divine light to make God's will known to the soul, and by charging the light with God's will he impresses it upon the soul. Just as the words I am about to speak are not the thing I want to speak about, but I with my voice commit my words to the air and the air conveys them to your ears and so they reach your soul. There are some religious who show with their fingers what they mean. Similarly angels show themselves in incorporeal likeness and so make God's will known to the soul.

Take now the first words spoken by the angel, 'Elizabeth shall bear a child.' From Elizabeth we know the condition of the soul wherein God's grace is born. John means grace-containing. 'The child shall be great, born full of grace.' Three sorts of births are pure from the mother's womb. St John was (born) so pure that he could do no mortal sin; our Lady too was full of grace, she never committed any sin at all, mortal or venial; and our Lord Jesus Christ was absolutely pure, gotten as he was of one so purified for his conception that he was never subject to original sin. Just as the Virgin

was detached so that soul must be in whom God's grace is to be born, not occupied with pleasant and unpleasant thoughts of people but intent on God alone.

Activity flows from essence. If there were no being there would be no doing. Heat comes from fire: no fire no heat. Cold comes from earth, and all very earthy things are dull-witted and sluggish and cold. Perfection of soul then depends upon heat which stirs it to lively activity.

By three things we know there is grace in the soul. First, by her being like God, for she is descended from divinity. Secondly, by her behaving like God, God's likeness stamped in the soul making her so much like God that to the devils she is presented as God, so noble the nature of grace. Thirdly, by the fact that the soul is not content unless it has all perfection at once, for as the heathen philosopher says, 'Perfection of soul means having likeness to God's angel as well as to all creatures.' Likeness and all creaturely perfection is created in the angels mentally before it is produced in creatures. Now the soul shall be like the angels in heaven; what the angels have possessed has been promised to the soul; to her shall be given what the angels have received. So the soul is never satisfied until she gets to where creaturely perfection is all one and undivided.

Next let us see how grace operates in the soul. We may compare it with an axe. This requires three things: first it must be well trimmed and polished. And so must the soul be stripped clean of sins, not able to sin, for the man of sin cannot do right without grace, without divine likeness; however much good he may do it will profit him nothing.—This axe, again, brings about the workman's desired end. Even so grace brings the soul into God; it transports the soul over herself and robs her of self and of all that is creature and unites her with God. Grace works with the soul till she herself has to make room, and then nothing is left there but God and the soul. We pray, *etc.*

XXXVIII

Here Meister Eckhart teaches that we must overcome four kingdoms, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ being won by the power of love.

Sancti per fidem vicerunt regna (*Hebr.* 11_{33}). St Paul says, 'By faith the saints subdued kingdoms.' Four kingdoms have the saints subdued and we too must subdue them. The first is the world. The earthly kingdom is subdued by spiritual poverty. The next kingdom, of the flesh, we conquer by hunger and by thirst. The third is of the devil, and this we overcome by sorrow and by pain. The fourth one is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is won by the power of love.

What though a man have all the world yet must he look upon himself as poor and all the time be reaching out his hand before the door of our Lord God, asking for the grace of God, soliciting his alms, for grace makes men God's children. As David cries, 'Lord, all my desire is of thee and for thee.' And St Paul says, 'I have counted all things as dung that I may win Christ.' It is impossible for any soul to be free from sin without the protection of God's grace. The function of grace is to quicken the soul and fit her for all divine uses, for grace flows out in a divine stream which savours of God and is a likeness of God and makes the soul Godlike. When grace with its savour is warped into the will it is called love and when this grace with its savour is warped into the intellect it is called the light of faith, and this same grace and savour warped into the irascible power goes by the name of hope. These divine virtues are so-called because they do divine work in the soul, just as we see with the light of the sun its energizing action on the earth, giving life to everything and keeping it in being. If this light goes, everything goes, as though it was not. And so with the soul. Where grace is and love things are easy to do. It is a sure sign if a man finds good works hard to do that there is no grace in him. A wise man says, 'I do not judge of people by the fine clothes they wear or the good food they eat, but by whether they have love. I feel none the

better for leading a hard life but only if I find I have more love.' Much prayer and fasting, strenuous work and so forth is the greatest folly if a man does not reform his ways but is irritable and restless. It behoves him to take stock, that man, of his morbid state and of all his faults, and turn his whole attention to overcoming them. When a man leads a well-regulated life then whatever he does will please God, and so he conquers the kingdoms. *rogemus.*

XXXIX

Here Meister Eckhart explains in what way the soul brings forth fruit, who abideth in God and in whom God abideth.

Qui manet in me et ego etc (*Joh.* 6_{57}). Christ says, 'he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit.' This saying is divided into three. First, 'he that abideth or dwelleth in me'; next, 'and I in him'; and thirdly, 'he shall bring forth much fruit.' With regard to the first St Paul says, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God': inasmuch as ye are dead with him and risen with him your life is hid with Christ in the heavenly Father. Now let us see what people are dwelling thus in God. One sign of them is that they are warm; there is no half-heartedness, tardiness or disinclination in them to good works. We have . . . that the waters are not frozen at their source: that is because the sun draws the moisture from the bottom of the hill up to the top and out of the hill so that it flows. It is the heat that does it, that makes it warm and living at the source, and the further it flows the colder and more impure it gets. It is the same with man. The further off he is from God the more stagnant and cold and insipid he will be. In a book about the curse of worldly pleasures and the pursuit of them St Ambrose lays it down that we must look for God with God. Man is low and God is high. Man therefore has to hoist himself up high above the world by means of divine love: love will break into God and pilot the soul about God and make everything clear to her in God. So far as the soul can understand and grasp

it, the power of love will raise her up to the highest that there is in God: to goodness namely, and in company with goodness she will flow out with God in all divine activities, in the goodness wherein God created heaven and earth. Our Lord says, 'Who can find a faithful and wise servant, one so faithful that he seeks no advantage for himself but God's glory alone?' Any servant who continues humbly in his service, to him I make this solemn promise: all God is and can, that verily he shall receive.

The second thing our Lord says is: 'He that abideth in me and I in him.' According to St Bernard it is far better that God should be in us than that we should be in God. For God to establish himself in us, for him to be living and moving in us, means that the soul is shaping her life to God, to the changeless eternal nature of God, and is actively living the life of God in what measure he metes it out to her. To which I add this third consideration, that since God is the life and being of the soul she is not sensible of aught save God in her motives and her acts. One unfailing sign that God is dwelling thus within the soul is that she is at rest. In all his works God seeks nothing but rest, and the soul is able to please him by nothing so much as by rest. The soul is never so like him as she is when at rest, keeping still.

Thirdly, our Lord says, 'He that abideth in me and I in him the same shall bring forth much fruit.' If I wanted to tell what these fruits are I should not know how to: I could not, I know that quite well. It has been said that 'he who knows God well enough to know he is unknowable to creature knows God most particularly, and he who plainly sees that no man can know God knows God most perfectly.' The fruits which God has promised can be known only by certain signs. We note six signs of them: first, the soul weakens in her sins, like an old building which gives way when it is shaken. This is a sign it will be built anew if the man who pulls it down can do the work or face the cost. Even so the soul succumbs to God and devotes all her powers to his works.—The second sign is the appearance of true virtues in the soul where steadfast-

ness, trustworthiness and freedom follow upon consciousness. —The third sign is that divine things firmly strike root in the heart, and the man finds that things have no relish, give him no pleasure, unless they are godly.—The fourth sign is that what has been withered by sins and shortcomings all grows supple again, verdant and vital and vigorous with grace.—The fifth sign is that all the powers of the soul become enlightened, no speck of sin or ignorance is left, the soul is all one light. But divine light enters the soul not openly by the door but covertly and veiled so that the soul is hardly conscious of when God comes and goes, and this God does in kindness, this keeping himself dark and well concealed. Suppose God came openly into the soul she would not be able to bear it, she would be discomfited and all undone with love and joy. And if God left her openly she could not bear that either, but would be worse discomfited and distraught the more, for divine light and bliss are overwhelming, nor can the soul endure these twain untempered any better than the eye can stand the sunlight untempered by the air.—The sixth sign is that what in the body and the soul has been destroyed and frozen is gathered up into God and suddenly inflamed with divine love. We pray, *etc.*

XL

Here Meister Eckhart explains that the soul must transcend her own nature if she would receive the teaching of God and behold the high nature of God and taste the sweetness of God.

Dimissa turba ascendit in montem (*Matt.* 14_{23}). The evangelist says, ' Our Lord dismissed the crowd and ascending into the mountain he opened his mouth and taught about the kingdom of God.' ' God taught.' Augustine (says), ' He who teaches there has his chair in heaven.' He who would receive God's teaching must ascend and transcend all creatures and renounce them. To receive divine teaching a man has to gather himself together and shut himself up in himself away from cares and worries and the coil of nether things. The soul has powers, many of them, very much divided; these he has to overcome,

even the ones which are in the mind. Thought which indeed works wonders when it is in itself, this must be mastered if God is to speak in the powers which are impartible.

Again, he ascends into the mountain, *i.e.* God reveals the sublimity and sweetness of his nature where all that is evil must needs fall away. There the soul knows nothing but God and herself and is in the guise of God's image.

Thirdly, by ascending he symbolized his lofty nature. That which is high is close to God, those soul powers for example which are so near to God. Our Lord on one occasion took three of his disciples and leading them up into a mountain appeared to them (in) the same glorious body that we shall have in eternal life. Our Lord said, 'Remember, when I spoke to you ye saw neither image nor likeness.'

St Augustine speaks of three kinds of knowledge. The first is corporal, form-seizing, like [that of the] eye which sees and receives images. The second is mental, but still aware of forms of corporal things. The third knowledge is interior, as it is in the spirit, that knows without form and likeness, and that knowledge is like unto the angels the host whereof is divided into three. According to one authority, 'The soul does not know herself apart from likeness, whereas an angel does know himself without likeness, and God.' Meaning to say, 'God is in the summit of the soul without image and likeness.'

'He ascended into the mountain and was transformed before them.' The soul shall be transformed, sealed in the form of God's Son. The soul is made in the image of God. The Son is the image of God. Where the Son starts the soul starts too, at the same point whence he is proceeding. Yet the Son as proceeding from the Father the soul is not suspended in, she is above form. Fire and heat are one yet far from the same. Taste and colour in an apple are one yet far from the same: the mouth tastes things which are lost on the eye. The eye sees colours unperceived by the tongue. The eye demands light, whereas taste holds good in the dark. The soul demands light, the soul knows of nothing but one, she is above form.

The prophet says, 'God will lead his sheep into green pastures.' According to one philosopher, 'The celestial flow is nowhere so well seen as in the artless brutes. These receive the heavenly influx simply, but people who are wise and have many senses are carried away into multitudinous things.' Our Lord promised to pasture his sheep upon the mountain, on young grass. Creatures all grow young in God. Creatures all fall out of God to start with and then through the angels. That which has no special creature nature bears the general stamp of creature. That which can take on angelic nature has it in him altogether. What God means to create the angel bears within himself, so that it may not be deprived of the perfection which other creatures have. Why is this? Because of the angel's nearness to God. Augustine says, 'What God creates flows out through the angels.' On high everything is young. On that mountain-top things are all fresh and green: falling into time they grow old and fade. There will our Lord pasture his sheep, on the green of all creatures, which exist at that height as they are in the angels. The soul would like this green more than anything in the world. As different as day from night is the least of creatures, there from any mundane thing. He who would receive God's teaching must ascend into his mountain. There God will perfect him, in the day of eternity, where the light is at the full. What I know in God, that is light. What concerns creature is darkness. Perception is light. John (says): 'God is the true light, which shines in the darkness.' What is darkness? Clinging, holding on nowhere, being blind and unconscious of creature. To see God a man must be blind, like St Paul: when he saw into himself he saw God. We pray, *etc.*

XLI

In this discourse Meister Eckhart teaches that the soul has to die to herself and to all creatures if she is to be receptive to divine being and divine life.

Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet (*Joh.* 12_{24}). They say this grain of wheat dies

utterly, losing its shape, its colour and its being. Wheat-nature is equally stone-nature then. Receptivity alone remains. Even so the soul must die if she is to grow receptive to another nature. Thou must be as the dead towards all happenings. God will never otherwise be thy entire being. He may give thee various gifts and light and comfort, much prized and very valuable things, but God will never give himself to thee without reserve till thou dost give thyself up altogether. As the soul dies in herself God comes to be her whole life, and there will remain no more than one, as my body and my soul are no more than one. 'He that hateth his soul shall keep it,' says our Lord. The word soul does not stand for the nature of the soul: we can no more find a name for the nature of the soul than we can for God. Nor does the soul grow old, but in her outlook on the body and regard for it we may well hate her, for in this respect she is hateful. Thus *in cantico* the soul exclaims, 'O ye daughters of Jerusalem regard me not as being brown: it is due to two things, to the sun having altered my colour and to my mother's sons fighting against me.' For all temporal things, everything under the sun, I have had inordinate affection. It is my mother's sons then who are fighting against me, not my father's, who are well disposed. 'Call me not brown. I am fair and noble in my nature and most gracious withal.' He that hateth his soul in this world shall preserve it. Augustine speaks of two worlds. He calls the soul a world, and in each of the angels there is a mental world, everything God ever made being present in each angel in much nobler form than it is in itself, since it is in him immaterially. The truth of it is there, for in the angels truth exists albeit not so much as a needle-point thereof compared with the ultimate reality.

Our Lord says, 'He that would serve me let him follow me.' Nothing more about following. Some people follow as long as things go well with them. It may be objected: our Lord demands so much. All he demands is that he may be allowed to give himself to us and as the love so is the gift. But since

God is love therefore he gives himself altogether. There is in the soul a natural likeness to this, for she exists in every limb and in each one whole. At her creation the soul is thus endowed in the ground of her being. So she can work in her members as a whole and in each one severally.

Now it may be questioned: What does our Lord mean by saying, 'Where I am there shall also my servant be?' Perhaps he means that God intends to steal from God something he wants to give the soul. In the first leaping forth when the Son glances out of the Father while at the same time remaining within, ere he, the Son, is born, he is imparting himself to her therein abiding, where he has no outlook at all, where she with him is the Son. Birth is tantamount to becoming. In the eternal birth is her becoming; there she becomes so wholly one that she has no other being than the selfsame being which is his, to wit, the being of the soul. This being is the source of all works wrought by God in heaven and earth. It is the ground and origin of all divine activity. In dying to her own nature and her being and her life the soul is born in her divinity. That is her becoming. She becomes so wholly one that there is no distinction except that he stays God and she stays soul. We pray, *etc.*

XLII

Puella surge. Taking this as his text Meister Eckhart exhorts the soul to arise and turn with her powers to God for the sake of four noble things which she finds in God.

Puella surge (*Luc.* 8_{54}). In that one word God tells the soul to arise from mortal things, and as the Son is the Word of the Father so he teaches in one Word how the soul is to rise, to hoist herself up above herself and dwell above her own self. The Father spoke one Word, that was his Son. In that single Word he uttered all things. Why did he say no more than one word? Because all things are present in his mind. If I could grasp in one idea all the thoughts I ever had or ever shall have then I should have one word, no more, for the mouth utters what is in the heart. But no more of this.

The soul should dwell above herself and for four reasons. First, for the manifold delights she finds in God. God's fullness is not able to contain itself, he must let creatures overflow from him, creatures to whom he can impart himself, who can receive his likeness, are poured forth without measure, enough, 'twould seem, to empty him : angels more in number than seeds or leaves or grasses. Through them all light flows to us and gifts and grace. What flows through this nature God offers the soul, and it would be as naught if he gave not himself in the gift.

Secondly, the soul ascends for the light she finds in God. All creatures are light in God. So sure as they flow out of God (they) are to God as naught to aught. In God is light and being, that is our darkness : naught, which in God is light, that is darkness.

Thirdly, the soul ascends for the *same* she finds in God, for there there is no *different*. Wisdom and goodness are the same in God. What wisdom is that very same is goodness and the rest. If in him wisdom were one thing and goodness were another there would be no satisfaction for the soul in God, but the soul has a natural inclination to God, and creatures all have an innate longing for wisdom. Take a soul overflowing with goodness, if goodness were one thing and wisdom another that soul would with pain have to give up her goodness if she wanted to pour forth in wisdom. St Augustine said, 'The souls which are in heaven are not wholly blest while they still have any leaning towards body.' The soul is not satisfied with anything but God, for in God she finds good as a whole. The soul must dwell above herself if she is to get God, for things all re-produce themselves, each one its own nature. Why does the apple-tree nature not produce wine *et e contrario* ? Because that is not its nature. Fire begets fire. Could it grasp its whole content it would beget that. Creature so loves its own being that were all the pain that ever was suddenly to fall upon the soul she would still refuse to give up her being which she has received direct from God. The soul must dwell

above herself if she means to lay hold of God; however hard she may try with the power whereby she grasps created things —and all of these she may well grasp by dint of that same power, aye, though God made a thousand earths and a thousand heavens, with that same power she could grasp them all—yet she cannot grasp God. The infinite God who is in the soul, he grasps the God who is infinite. Then God conceives God, God is gotten by God in the soul, making her like him.

Fourthly, the soul ascends for the limitlessness she finds in God, all things in God being free from space and time. (In the) Apocalypse (it says), 'Behold, I make all things new,' in the eternal birth, that is, and he is being born to-day, he flowing into the soul and she flowing back into God, and just as one may die of fright so may one die of joy. Thus the soul dies to herself ere she ascends into God. She takes four steps into God. At the first step she weakens in hope and desire and fear. At the next step hope, fear and desire vanish completely. The third step makes her all unmindful of them. The fourth step means oblivion, wherein she never thinks of them again.

XLIII

Puella surge. On these words Meister Eckhart teaches how God with his Spirit changes into himself the spiritual nature of the soul, giving analogies for this and pointing out the things that help and hinder it.

Puella surge (*Luc.* 8_{54}). 'Arise!' Our Lord laid his hand upon the maid and said, 'Arise!' The hand of God, that is the Holy Spirit. All things are wrought in heat. When the fiery love to God grows cold in the soul she dies, and if God is to work in the soul God must be atoned in the soul. For the soul to be one with God or to become so, she must be divorced from things, she must be all alone as God is all alone, and work wrought by God in the lone soul is better than heaven and earth. God has made the soul for union with himself. Says one of the saints, 'The soul was made from naught and

He alone did make her, no one with him.' If anyone had helped him he would have had the more to fear, lest the soul turn that way. The soul must be by herself just as God is by himself. Spiritual things and corporal are incompatible. If divine perfection is to operate in the soul the soul must be spirit even as God is spirit, and if God gives to the soul in the soul he can give only in a limited way. So he takes her into himself in himself: thus she becomes one with him. For example, when fire and stone come together, both of the natural kind, the stone remains quite cold inside owing to the denseness of the stone, and similarly with the air and light. What thou seest in the air thou seest in the sun. And since both of them are natural there is more light in a mile than in a half and more in a half than in a house. The best example to be found is that of the body and the soul. These are so closely knit that body is powerless to act apart from soul and soul apart from body, and as the soul sticks to the body so God sticks to the soul. When the soul does leave the body that means the death of the body. And the soul dies if God leaves her.

There are three hindrances to union of the soul with God. First, her being too much divided, not simple (pure) enough. The soul is not simple in her relations with creatures. The second one is attachment to temporal things. And thirdly, being fond of the body will prevent union with God.

Also there are in the soul three aids to union with God. First, the soul being one and undivided: to be atoned with God she has to be as pure as God is. Next, her being above herself and all temporal things and keeping hold of God. Thirdly, detachment from all mortal things and perfect freedom of action. Concerning the free soul St Augustine says, 'When thou dost not want (me) I want thee. When I want thee thou wilt have none of me. When I pursue thee thou dost flee from me.' Returning, pure souls go running back to the pure nature of God.

XLIV [1]

Here Meister Eckhart speaks about divine lordship and what it consists in and how the sovran good is ordered to the soul and how the soul receives its influx and how the soul loves and knows with it.

Domine rex omnipotens in dicione tua cuncta sunt posita (*Esth.* 13_9). Power, lordship, lies in two things, in freedom and in many good and beautiful things, the possession of them in peace. What is freedom? Philosophers say, 'That thing is free which is suspended from naught and from which naught is suspended.' It follows that nothing is free but the first cause, the cause of all causes. To lordship it also belongs to have these two things: freedom and many good and beautiful things, in peace. God is everything good in all and he possesses himself in all, for what God is he is in all. When a man says he has love and wisdom and will and goodness, he is that, for God is that. God is not naught. God was before naught. God has no before and no after: naught has a sequel, its sequel is aught. Naught's fore is God, for he is before naught, and naught's after is aught. God none goes before, none comes after. Lo, the cause of all things, poised in itself in the invisible light which is himself! God is a light self-poised in absolute stillness. That is the one light, the one mode of himself that knows and understands itself. The understanding of the eternal light that is light from the light, the Person of the Son. The Father spoke one word namely his Son. In that one Word he spoke all things. The Word of the Father is none other than his understanding (conception) of himself. The understanding of the Father is none other than the Son, and this understanding understands and that which this understanding understands is the same thing that understands it, to wit, the light from the light. John says, 'God spoke one Word,' his eternal understanding (conception) of himself, his Son. In this unique conception he conceived all things and knew how to make them out of naught, which they are in

[1] See also Greith, pp. 123–4.

themselves. But their eternal being he was himself, for in God there is nothing but God: God is without other. By the same token all creatures are the one light since they are immanent in the light. Things all flow out of him as light to manifest the hidden light. James (says), '*Omne datum optimum etc.*' Herein lies proof that all things are light, the Father having poured them forth to manifest his concealment, even as all things are shown a light to light them back into themselves, those who do not choose to turn away. Ah, those who steadfastly remain free from multiplicity, what light, what grace is revealed to them! But the Sovran Good is so ordered to the soul that she cannot receive it without means, as Dionysius says, 'The means are light and grace which illumine the understanding of the soul.' What is understanding? Knowing each thing as it is, pure and simple, with unerring certainty. Dionysius (says), 'Ye must free yourselves from everything to understand the Highest Good, God namely.' What are we to understand by God? Power. We must unify ourselves so that the one power may energize in us. Also he is the one good moving all things towards their good, to himself, while he stays unmoved. And he is the one perfect simplicity, and the more simple thou art the more wilt thou realize his simpleness; we ought to be perfectly simple, separated out from everything and from ourselves as well, our minds laid bare before him and the workings of the powers of the soul, albeit the chief power, the understanding, is the only one God will let work with God. Thus he perfects his own nature in her and turns her into himself. She understands with him, loves with him, knows with him. We pray, etc.

XLV

Here Meister Eckhart shows how the soul is like Jerusalem and whence comes her holiness and how the divine light shines on five sorts of people.

Vidi civitatem sanctam Jerusalem (*Apoc.* 21_2). St John saw a city and a city stands for two things: safety is one, it cannot be harmed; the other, a concourse of people. This city had

no prayer-house ; God was the temple himself. There was no need of light, neither sun nor moon, the glory of our Lord illumined it. This city is a symbol of the individual soul. 'The soul is the temple of God,' says St Paul, and St Augustine declares, 'The soul is too strong to be harmed unless she consent.'

First, as to the peace there should be in the soul. Therefore she is called Jerusalem. Dionysius (says), 'Divine peace pervades and orders and ends all things ; did peace fail to do this all would fall into confusion.'—Again, peace makes creatures loving and harmless.—In the third place, it makes creatures useful one to another and also beholden to each other. Ye cannot have anything for yourself irrespective of others. That spells separation. Fourthly, it makes them turn back to their original source, to God.

Secondly, he calls the city holy. According to St Dionysius holiness means complete purity, liberation and perfection. Purity is sinlessness, and this makes the soul free. Likeness is the chief delight and joy there is in heaven ; suppose God came into the soul and she were not like him, she would suffer anguish. (In) St John (it) says, 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' Of the angels and the saints we may say that they are perfect, but the saints not wholly so, for they still feel some affection for their bodies which now in ashes lie. In God alone is complete perfection. I marvel that St John durst ever say, unless he had seen in the spirit that there are three Persons, how the Father empties himself completely into the birth, into the Son, and pours himself into the Holy Ghost with exuberance of love.

Holiness, again, connotes withdrawnness from the world. God is aught, pure being, and sin is naught and remote from God. God made the angels and the soul on the verge of aught, that is, not far from God. The soul is created under the shadow of the angels, so to say, and indeed they have a common nature, but all corporal things are made in the neighbourhood of naught, a long way off from God. In lavishing herself upon

the body the soul acquires merit and must together with the body be raised up again to God. When she is free from earthly things the soul is holy. Zacheus while he was upon the ground could not see our Lord. Augustine (says), 'If a man would be holy let him forsake mundane things.' It is very often said that the soul cannot be pure unless she is reduced to her original simplicity, the state God created her in; just as from copper gold cannot be made by two or three roastings, it must be reduced to its elemental nature. Things which melt on heating and solidify on cooling are purely of a watery nature. They must therefore be turned back again to water and get quite rid of their present nature. Thus heaven and science conspire to transmute it into gold. We can counterfeit silver with iron and with copper gold: the more like the more false, without riddance. It is the same with the soul. Virtues are easy to talk of, easy to feign, but to have them really is extremely rare.

Thirdly, he calls the city new. New describes what is unused or else near to its beginning. Our beginning is God; when we are united with him we shall be new. Some people foolishly think that God has for ever been making or keeping the things we now see and that he will give these to them in time. But divine acts we know to be effortless, as I will show. I am standing here and suppose I had been standing here for thirty years with my face showing, though nobody had seen it, I should have stood here all the same, and suppose a mirror handy, if it were held before my face my face would cast an image in it without the slightest effort on my part, and if that happened yesterday then it would be new and again to-day it would be newer still and so on for thirty years or for all time, if it was always showing, with perhaps a thousand mirrors, and through no effort of my own. God has always in him all ideas, not as soul and other creatures but as God. With him there is no new or old, but as I was saying of the mirror, with us there is old and eternal too.

When the body is ready God pours in a soul suitable to the

body and having a likeness therewith and because of the likeness a liking. Hence there is no one free from self-love: they are deceiving themselves, people who think they have no love of self. Of course we cannot help loving those things which further our progress to God, that is all one with love of God. If I intend to cross the sea and want a ship, that is part and parcel of the wishing to be over and having gotten to the other side I do not want the ship. Plato says, 'What God is I know not,' meaning to say, 'while the soul is done up in a body she cannot see God.' 'But what he is not I do know right well,' as we note with the sun whose radiance is not to be borne undimmed by the air. Dionysius (says), 'If the divine light does shine into me it must be veiled like my soul.' Further he says, 'The divine light shines upon five kinds of people.' The first are not alive to it. They are like the cattle, too rough to receive it. For instance, if I go upon the water and it is rough and muddy, I shall not be able to see my face in it because it is so troubled.—The second but little light illumines, as it might be the flash of a sword. The third receive an impression more like a great flash of light(ning) and then dark again. [Meaning all those who lapse from light divine and fall into sin.] With the fourth kind this is more pronounced. But sometimes he will enter simply by attracting her, increasing her desire. If someone is going to fill all our laps then let everyone make his lap wide and able to hold a great deal. Augustine (says), 'To receive a great deal a man must enlarge his capacity.'—The fifth are aware of a light as bright as day but still through a chink as it were. As the soul says in the Book of Love, 'My Beloved looked at me through a chink. His face was comely.' Augustine said, 'Lord, sometimes thou dost give me such great sweetness, if this at its perfection is not heaven I know not then what heaven can be.' A master says, 'The man who tries to see God, unless he be adorned with godly works will be put back to ordinary things.' Is there then no way of seeing God quite clearly? Yes. *In cantico* the soul is telling of it where she says, 'My love looked

at me through the window,' that is, with nothing between, 'and I knew it, he was standing by the wall,' meaning the body, which is fallible, 'and he said, "Open to me my love," for he is wholly mine in love, he belongs to me and I to him alone, "my dove," that is, in longing, "my beautiful," that is, in act. "Arise, make haste and come to me. The cold is past," of which everything dies: things all live by warmth; "the rain is over and gone," pleasure, that means, in temporal things; "the flowers are coming up in our land": a foretaste of eternal life. "Begone, O north wind, which withers up": God is forbidding temptation to hinder the soul any more. "Come, wind from the south, blow through my garden and make my spices to flow": God bids all perfections to enter my soul.'

XLVI

Beatus vir qui inventus est sine macula (*Eccl.* 31_8). 'Blessed is the man that is found without blemish and that goes not after gold nor puts his trust in perishable riches.' And in the Gospel there is another saying of our Lord, 'What shall a man give in exchange, or as ransom, for his soul?' These words suggest three noble qualities of soul. The noble conduct of the soul includes all that a man is able to do or to give, and supposing he loses his soul he will in effect have done nothing at all. Then the second noble quality. This he refers to in the words, 'Blessed is the man.' And the third noble quality of the soul is, putting no trust in perishable riches. A (heathen) philosopher says man's happiness lies in four things. The first is a sufficiency of this world's goods. The man who has succeeded in winning wealth and honour is by the denizens of this world called a happy man, and this is the basest sort of happiness since there is no warranty of its being from God. The second happiness is better, it comes of being sound in wind and limb. The third kind which is better still is due to a virtuous and well-ordered life. The fourth and most perfect happiness of all belongs to the man who is full of love and wisdom.—But is this true? It is only a heathen philosopher who says so.—

Yes, it is quite true. Then again it is maintained that God does not love anyone, share his love with anyone but those who dwell with the eternal wisdom, who are housemates with it. According to one of the saints all human love is misbegotten since it is ever seeking its own selfish ends. If one man seeks another it is because he likes him, and if he did not like him he would take no notice of him. No one is thinking of his neighbour but each one of himself. 'God alone,' a saint observes, 'is altogether kind, for he bestows his favours disinterestedly, simply out of goodness, out of kindness, he gives all his gifts.' Suppose a man is forced to seek his own advantage—and sometimes there is need of this, if he is poor, for instance, and unable to afford to do good for itself—then, says St Augustine, 'Seek and find.' For in everything he does man is seeking two things, to get hold of something in which he can rest or to get rid of something that is spoiling his rest, supposing he has it, and which is a spiritual likeness of eternal rest. He says, 'Seek and find,' eternal happiness to wit, in everything you do, not 'seek it' in the darkness of this world. Further I would say: seek and find, what you seek is all in creatures. If the least of the joys experienced by creature came as free, as naked and as undisguised as it is implanted and up-springing in light divine eternally: if joy did come like this into the soul and filled her on a sudden overfull, she would be unhinged, it would be insupportable, like sunshine to the eyes except it be tempered in the air. No eye could admit the over-brilliant light and not be stricken blind. Therefore I say: seek and find the likeness of divine light and joy in every creature, but not, as you would do with creature to know and take pleasure therein. That is the whole cause of sin, man's turning his attention away from God to creature which he enjoys and takes pleasure in.

But if it is a sin in man to be self-seeking then peradventure God has that same sin in him, for he is always thinking of himself and seeking to glorify himself. He has created all manner of things, each one to show forth his glory since no single

creature could make his greatness known. That is why, the Doctor says, he made all sorts of creatures, and the ones who showed him best he made in greatest number, angels namely. In the overflowing love which he could not contain God spilled them . . .[1] and poured himself out in all creatures when he created them and saw them there before his eyes and made known his glory therein. I say, and the saints will bear me out, that God's only Son would never have been born but for the storm of love and bliss which made God empty himself out in eternal love and joy, and that his divine glory was all revealed therein and that God loves nothing but himself. He cast forth his joy in all creatures in the guise of an angel : in such pleasure as man feels in creature he was meant to find this angel of divine joy so that by hanging on to him he might be borne into God. God is consumed with love for everything. It is infinite, eternal, incomprehensible ; he cannot reach the end of it in eternity, because it has no end ; he cannot heighten it, for there is nothing higher than his love ; he cannot comprehend the extent of it, for he cannot surpass himself in loving. It is fathomless in baptism albeit God cannot bless just as he will lest he degrade himself. To love something better than himself would make it higher than he. So God loves nothing but himself and creature so far as he finds it in himself and himself in creature. What he cast off from himself into creature is an image of the love and bliss which in him is infinite. Suppose that by grabbing with both hands as quickly as I can with one I get a hundred marks with one and with the other nothing but a penny. While I can get a hundred marks with the one hand only, I should be a fool to lay that idle to get a penny with the second. God swallows up everything in his love, for it is infinite. And man is behaving like a fool when he looks for love and joy in creature, things of little or no value compared with the riches of God's love. The precious part, the treasure of the soul is divine wisdom, wherein she is partaker of all divine felicity and can gather treasure everywhere, as I have often said.

[1] Dots mark illegible passages in the MS.

We read that (if) a man sacrifices something for which he gets nothing in return, he may acquire more merit than if with his own hand he offered it upon the altar, for thus he gives his gift for love of God and does his will and bears his loss with patience so that he makes an offering both of his loss and of his will to our Lord God. Supposing my friend dies, one I would not part with for a fortune, if I give him willingly to our Lord God, though I would not have lost him for all that I possess, then I shall have in God a place infinitely larger than my friend ever could have filled on earth. He is called rich, the man who has a thousand marks of gold and has them placed where none can filch them from him. But the riches of the soul are safer still, where neither devil nor yet man nor even God can get them. God does not want to, but he could not an he would. I give God full leave, as I do the lowest of mankind, to harm me if he will. Suppose he takes my youth, and no thanks to me, I shall not have the sins of it. Suppose he takes it with my leave he wrongs me not one whit. Of this I am quite sure, nothing but sin can do me any harm. The only really noble man is he who turns his back on it, for him I feel the most profound respect: whilom unrighteous man compact with Holy Spirit gotten to God in true repentance. The doctrine is that God loves none but himself and that the soul is brought to God by uncreated divine wisdom wherein she becomes partaker of God's bliss, and that God is drawn to the soul by love. I am sure that with anyone whose love I have, all he has is mine to use and to enjoy. That is the reason why God gives his Holy Spirit which more than anything that God can give represents his love, that is why, (I say), he gives to all his Holy Spirit. St John says in one of his epistles, 'God is love. He who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him.' According to Boecius the philosopher, 'That only is a holy life which is able to sum up everything into one perfect and unchanging peace.' May every good befall us, so help you and me the *etc.*

XLVII

Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur etc. (*Matth.* 21_{13}). 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' The visible church is called a house of prayer; therein we take the physic of the soul in the seven sacraments. And Holy Christendom is called the prayer-house of our God; therein our Lord is eaten in his sacred body which lives and grows in all its members, in Christian people namely. The kingdom of heaven too is called a house of prayer; therein rests our Lord in the enjoyment of his power. The fourth house of God is the soul; therein our Lord is doing his work by means of his grace.

First of all we want to know who we ought to pray to. Next, how we ought to pray. Thirdly, what we ought to pray for. And fourthly what is the good of it.

To begin with let us make it plain that we ought to pray to God alone. This was taught by our Lord himself when he spoke with the woman at the well. 'Ye pray ye know not where nor unto whom ye pray nor what it is ye pray for; but the hour cometh when men shall worship God not only on the mountains and in temples, they shall worship him in spirit and in truth. For my Father is spirit, and people must pray to him in spirit: such true worshippers my heavenly Father seeks.'

Next, how we ought to pray. Do you know how I know or can tell a good man? Not by fasting nor alms nor other austerities, but by prayer. He who in prayer can best unite himself to God, him I call the best of men, for he is dead to hate, to anger and the whole brood of sin. The man who mortifies himself in these things most will pray the best. A man might give a kingdom for the love of God and doing nothing further . . . he would have done nothing at all. To say but one *Ave Maria* and help to slay the progeny of sin in him would have accomplished more. Our Lord says, 'Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die it brings forth no fruit, but if it falls to the ground and dies it brings forth fruit abundantly.' A

man quits his sins and starts bearing fruits; in his sufferings he dies and is poured out in grace; he challenges faith and finds love. All honest work is worship, so the Scriptures say. And I say so too, provided it is done as worship. Say a man fasts and gives alms, if by that means he can reach up to God . . . Thomas says that prayer simply means climbing up to God. God says that he is high and man is low; so for a man to get to God he must put something under him that will make him higher. He has to put under him the things that God has made, even the soul herself as to her powers whose work can never be perfect in the body. I refer to sight and hearing and (the rest of) the five senses, which link up soul and body. The soul must withdraw into those powers which can function to perfection in the body, *i.e.* love and knowledge. In these twin powers the soul pours out of (and dies to) the world. For knowing God I want no eyes (or ears): that needs another, spiritual, knowing. To be atoned with God in love I need no hands or feet nor any limbs whatever, but stealing forth of all created things man locks his spirit up alone with God and uniting his spirit with God's spirit, becomes one spirit with God. That is true prayer, and that alone, and only in that prayer will God be moved to listen to man's longings or answer his entreaties, for above (time) and place God does his godly work alone in me.

'Spirit.' In this wise shall ye pray, not with many words nor minding much about the book, but rather where words fail in prayer does the prayer get home. When I notice people reading with the lips I know they cannot read well. If a scholar is quietly conning a book I can see he is learning. Only for two reasons do men pray in words, thus priests and learned men devoted to God's service sing and read in chorus, it awakens other people and spurs them to the interior life. Again, when the heart is overwrought feeling grows articulate, finding vent in words of fervour and devotion. Had I to counsel anyone as to the shortest, safest, sweetest way, the one which God most clearly and readily provides, I should say this one, prayer.

Seven reasons might be given to justify our praying to the saints. I will give you only three. The first one is that the soul knows the stream of divine light and joy to be over-bright and strong at its source and that it floods the highest powers of the soul and is then passed on to her lower powers, those which are bound up with the body, and afterwards proceeds to suffuse the limbs and fill with light the human body—as the Scriptures say, the body of the righteous shall shine forth like the sun at the judgment day. The soul is aware that in her superior powers there is a divine light and bliss which in her inferior powers is dimmed and as it were no light at all compared with the divine splendour, so she in her humility durst not pray to God direct but asks the saints to offer up her prayer to God, making intercession for her. That is good prayer, for by humility God is exalted.

The second reason is that the stream of divine light and sweetness is over-bright and strong for any creature to endure. Angels, souls, all creatures, if they were reduced to a single angel, to a single soul, could not go back in praise to God. Angels are called heavenly birds because they sing God's praises without ceasing, in their exultation rising up to God. Said Moses, all waters flow out of the sea and flow back again into the sea, and so divine joy is all poured out on creatures and flows back with God into God. The soul perceives this clearly, but seeing, on the other hand her frailness, she does (not) dare importune God for aught, so turning to the saints, to whom belongs some power and who have been men, she entreats their help. Otherwise it would be impossible that anyone should ever want to seek aid from the saints, for God alone is altogether kind, and has the widest sympathy ; he feels men's sorrows more than they do themselves, and his pleasure in men's happiness is greater than their own.

The third reason is that God has destined man for eternity. One man stands in the presence of another and bows down before him, thereby honouring God. Whether he knows it or not he really is paying homage to God, and no one who knows

keeps the homage himself but gives it to God. May this prayer be perfected in us, so help you and me, *etc.*

XLVIII

Justorum autem animæ in manu dei sunt etc. (*Sap.* 3_1). 'The souls of the just are in the hand of God.' Why does he say 'in the hand' to describe the nearness of the soul to him? For it is rather in the heart or in my soul. . . . By reason of three things, (he) says, the (souls) of the just are in the hand of God: things are best seen when held in the hand, and God can see himself therein and can play therewith. Again, he made the soul himself without the help of creature; thirdly, the very finest work is done by hand, and with the index finger man gauges to a nicety the rough and smooth. There is said by one of the Church Fathers (to be) a stream of wisdom in this land of exile and the soul knows by whom she has been made. They asked him how to get to God. He answered, 'Know thyself, that is the way to God.' This saying became famous and was written at the entrance to their house of God. In this knowledge St Dionysius was accomplished, they called him Wisdom and Bird of Heaven. He knew, although he was a heathen, all the courses of the stars and of the heavens and he read it in the stars when they crucified our Lord. He said, 'It must be either someone in the world undergoing martyrdom or whom nature's maker is afflicting in some way.' He saw this by the sun having darkened its light and the moon a fortnight old was at the full and standing by the sun, which shows that the sun was withholding its beams. As well could a man be wise without wisdom or exactly the same first and last both at once, so it must be true that our Lord was martyred at that hour and St Dionysius' faith in nature was the beginning of his longing for the true faith. Also he has written more about the heavenly hierarchies than any saint has done.

Again, the best work is finished by hand, and God holds the soul lovingly in his hand, working upon her, he having got her so close to himself that no one can take her away. Our Lord

himself says, addressing good people, 'Who touches you touches the light of my eyes.' Elsewhere he says, 'What ye do unto the least of mine ye have done it unto me.' A blow upon the head straightway rings through all the limbs. And it is the surest sign in man of his union with God that at any disrespect to God his heart is wrung with grief as though he himself had shown it, regardless of who did, and that his heart rejoices at anything redounding to God's honour as though it were his own, and a great deal more so. People's souls are in the hand of God and not their bodies, that is because he made the soul without a tool, as it were by hand to save her from this exile and be her protector.

Thirdly, he intends to be her reward himself, that is why he brought (her) out of this land of exile into eternal life.

Three reasons are given why God made the soul himself without any instrument or any help from creature. (He) has made her, not as a part of his own nature albeit a nature of (divine descent. For were she) not of the rank of God it would be beneath his dignity to cast (the image of) himself into so changeable a creature wherein his godly light might last or might go out altogether: that is not fit for God. The chief reason why God made the soul himself is the sheer perfection of his love; the second is the noble nature of the soul and the third the worthlessness of creatures: these three together give the explanation. Supposing God had called in any angel to help in the making of the soul he must have put into the soul something of the angel, for never did an artist paint (a picture), carve an image or write the letters of an alphabet but he must have copied the pattern in his mind; so neither could a creature help God create the soul without in some sort leaving its image in the soul. The soul was thus constrained never to bear more love towards that creature than towards any other and to cease from seeking her own interests and pleasure; for it is by these that the soul becomes debased and adulterated with creatures. Further, to constrain the soul to love him God has made her after his own image: like his eternal nature

in her (memory) and like his wisdom in her intellect and like his goodness in her will. Just as, eternally, he was able in his power to create her and in his wisdom to create her as he would and for what happiness he would, to wit his infinite good, so has he done in time. When, having learnt the alphabet, I write a word upon the page, it is not (myself) I pour out in the letters, I am copying the pattern in my mind. Nor is the soul made of the nature of God but in the likeness of the holy Trinity, so being tied to God alone, by love to him, she knows only peace and comfort. For from likeness springs the greatest joy and love and comfort that can be had from virtues or works of any kind in heaven or on earth.

As to the other two, how God tries the soul and how he is her reward, that is told elsewhere. May all these things befall us, So help you and me the Father, Son, etc. Amen.

XLIX

'*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a banquet for his son*' (*Matth.* 22_2). In this banquet we are shown a symbol of eternal happiness, and happiness is joy and folks enjoy themselves chiefly in one way, in feasting namely, so eternal joy and bliss are symbolized by feasting. Four things contribute towards this enjoyment. The first one is discernment, hence a well-assorted company. The second is a common purpose; the third is good arrangement: to everyone his rightful place; the fourth one, food in plenty, so that to each is given what he most desires. In the words of our Lord himself, 'All things are now ready, bid them to the marriage feast.' God himself is the food. As the Scriptures say, 'Show me thy glory and I shall be satisfied.' Also the place must be large, so that none may come too late, as the king's servants declared, 'Lord it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room.' Heaven is so wide that none can be too late, there is always room. Not so upon earth. Here everyone expects to get more than he deserves. That is because we over-estimate our worth. In heaven there is no

desire for this, it would grieve a man to get more than his deserts, since he can see what is due. And he demands from no one what is his, for each one reckons his (friends') joys his own in the bond of love.

Next[1] let us see what should be their care who are destined to enjoy this divine honour. To be beautiful is their first care, their second to be noble, to be rich the third and wise the fourth; fifthly it behoves them to be strong, and sixth sweet-tempered, the seventh to be healthy and live long. All these seven things are found in perfection in the bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his bride the soul must have seven things to correspond. So beautiful is our Lord Jesus Christ the sun and moon marvel at his beauty. His bride then must (be) pure in thought and word and deed. She may not be self-luminous but she is virgin-clear, and her clearness is illumined by the splendour of our Lord as the sun lights up the deep. Secondly our Lord is noble: in heaven he has a Father and no mother and on earth he had a mother but no father, so his lineage is wonderful, past any man's conception, as the prophet said, 'Who can declare his generation?' Accordingly his bride must be worthy of all honour, in merit ranking higher than anything inferior to God, able to praise God as all are praising (him in) doing and leaving undone and in suffering, so that just as God is seeking to glorify himself in all his works so she can seek God's glory in everything she does.—Thirdly our Lord is rich, the Scriptures say that heaven and earth are his and he gives life and being to all creatures. So his bride can freely confide her cares to him, and it argues gross mistrust for anyone who has resigned himself to God to be afraid things will go wrong and not to trust in God who is so rich and kind to overflowing and readier to give than we are to receive.—The fourth thing is his wisdom, this is so lucid it lights up the ground of every heart and nothing is hidden from his view. Accordingly his bride must mind her ways at all times, everywhere. If a man a hundred miles away knew all his wife was

[1] See also Pfeiffer's Tractate III (Trans., vol. i, p. 299).

doing she would take good care lest she were put to shame before him.—In the fifth place our Lord is strong: from him all things come and he has done all work and bettered all our sins and watched over us, the guardian of our worth. [Salvation is with him.] So his bride may hope great things. She must be free from strife and fear and weakness. What she cannot do he can do perfectly, as the Gospel says, 'things to men impossible are possible to God.'—Sixth, he is sweet-tempered. In the Scriptures he is called a lamb without blemish, having not a trace of hate or anger. He is all things to all men, each one after his own heart. And his bride must be kindhearted and long-suffering, able for his sake to bear (whatever he may send her).—Seventh and last, our Lord is immortal whereas other things are cursed with the fear of death. So it behoves his bride willingly and cheerfully to give up all the things that change and pass. Perfection of soul lies in four things. First, in never holding anything so dear but she is just as glad to part with it as keep it. Next, in never finding any cross God sends her so difficult to bear but she would suffer it as lief as not on account of the interior reward of his chastisement. The third is that God's justice is as precious as his mercy, to herself the same as other people. For many folks approve and prize God's justice towards others but find (it) hard and bitter towards themselves, not understanding that God is as perfect in his justice as in his compassion. Realizing this the prophet cries, 'Lord, sweeter than honey are thy judgments.' One who does not relish the judgment and justice of our God neither will he render thanks for hardship and adversity. He who gladly suffers the divine decree has surrendered his own will. In the fourth place the perfect soul delights in all God's gifts, in those of other people as much as in her own. That comes of perfect love and unselfishness. By these four things the soul is transported right out of herself and established in God. So help you and me the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

L

Misericordia domini plena est terra etc. (*Ps.* 32_5). King David says, 'The earth is full of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Whereon St Augustine comments thus, 'The earth is full of pity since it is full of pain and lamentation, but in heaven there is no pity because there is no pain.' Again, King David says, '*verbo domini celi firmati sunt et spiritu ore eius omnis virtus eorum*' (*ibid.*). 'The heavens are established by the power of the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the breath of his mouth is the Holy Spirit.' This passage is well suited to the festival of the Holy Trinity, for the words of it suggest the Holy Trinity: the power of the Father, where he speaks of the heavens being established; the wisdom of the Son, where he says 'the Word of the Father'; the goodness of the Holy Ghost, where he says 'all the power of them by the breath of his mouth.' St Paul realized this when being caught up into the third heaven he saw unspeakable things and cried with a loud voice, 'O *altitudo diviciarum*,' 'O thou depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are thy judgments and thy ways past finding out.' St Augustine's explanation is as follows. 'St Paul's being caught up into the third heaven merely refers to three kinds of knowledge belonging to the soul. The first is knowledge of creatures, which we can perceive with the five senses, and all the things which are objective to mankind. Therein we see God but not all of him, only his dense body. The second knowledge is more spiritual, we have it of the absent, the consciousness, for instance, of a friend a thousand miles away of whom I have been thinking. I see him in imagination, his dress, his form and in time and place. That too is nature. In this knowledge he is not intimately known, I cannot really know him by means of time or place or colour. The third heaven is purely spiritual knowledge, therein the soul is rapt away from all objective, bodily things. There we hear without means and see without matter, there there is (no) red or white or black or blue. In this pure perception the

soul knows God altogether as onefold in his nature and threefold in his Person.' St John *in apocalypsi* says, speaking of this knowledge, 'that light enlightens all who come into this world,' alluding to his then state of gnosis. This clearly means that none see God or anything divine save those who have this gnosis—who are fully enlightened—not any other kind of knowledge. Accordingly he says, 'all who come into *this* world.' If he meant this dense material world his words would not be true, for here only blindness is rife, he means pure perception, his vision of the blessed Trinity, of God as the Word in the beginning where the Word is with God and the Word is God. St Augustine's comment is, 'If he had said more no one would have understood it.' Furthermore he (David) says, the heavens were established by the word of the Lord. And Job speaks of the heavens being poured forth at his command.

These things we know concerning heaven, that it is fixed and changeless and pure and all-containing and fruitful. It ought to be the same with man who is meant to be a heaven for God to dwell in. He should be fixed as the heavens are fixed: according to the Scriptures 'there is no inconstancy in the righteous man and friend's friendship with friend is friendship with God.' God has good and evil, joy and grief are all one to him. Our Lord says, 'The house that is built upon a rock will not fall.' The legend is that some two miles or more beyond the earth there is no rain or hail or wind, it is so still that letters traced in dust or sand stay undisturbed. Man who so easily is troubled and disturbed may judge by this how far he is removed from God by sin, for it is infinitely high from earth to heaven.

Again, we find purity and clarity in heaven and so we do in water. And it is a fact that things held over it give no reflection when earth is mingled with it. When it is clear a thing held over it will form an image. And the same with man: while he is defiled with earthly things he cannot see his purity nor yet God's clarity. But our purity is as it were impurity compared to God's perfection, so the prophet says.

St Bernard asks, 'If the soul is whole in every member why does the hand not see the sun, just like the eye? Because the hand is not transparent like the eye. If hand or (foot) could receive the sun as the eye can do, then hand or foot would see the sun as clearly as the eye. Why are sweet things not tasted by the ears as well as by the lips or sweet songs and voices relished by lips as well as ears? Because they are not fit for it. Why does the carnal man not know such spiritual things as the spiritual person does?' The reason, broadly speaking, is that anyone who thinks to know and relish spiritual things with carnal senses is mightily mistaken. I will not enlarge on this [but a heathen philosopher declares that the good man is half the time in the toils of sin, that is to say in sleep. In that state evil-doers do neither good nor ill. When a good man who has something on his mind is visited with pleasant dreams, that is a favourable sign. If, dallying with some evil thought the good man fights it in his sleep it is a sign that he is on his guard. But why does he entertain it? He is asleep, so it does him no harm.] [1]

Thirdly, apprehending heaven and all things he keeps hold of them. By love a man is able to retain his hold on everything, friend and foe alike. Friends he loves in God, foes for love of God and he loves all God's creation for God's sake inasmuch as it belongs to God.

Fourthly, heaven is fruitful, it helps all kinds of work. Heaven does more than the carpenter who builds a house.

In the fifth place, heaven is the stool of our Lord. According to the Scriptures, 'Heaven is his stool and the earth his footstool.' The heathen philosopher Aristotle says, 'Were there no house nor place and no materials it would be all one being, one matter, which being divided is like another soul.' As the soul says in the Book of Love, 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart.' God help us all.[2] Amen.

[1] This is almost certainly an interpolation.

[2] Sievers leaves the sermon unfinished, relegating the last three sentences to a footnote with the remark, 'I cannot make this out.' The translation given here is only tentative, but there is obviously a reference to *Cant.* 8_6.

LI

Vere dominus iste est in loco isto etc. (*Gen.* 28_{16}). 'Surely God is in this place.' Jacob said this. 'If our son takes a wife from this country my life will be a burden to me.' At these words he (Isaac) ordered that Jacob be sent to the land of her (Rebecca's) birth. And for two reasons. First, to find a wife, and secondly because his brother Esau was his enemy and he had to flee from him.

Egressus Jacob. Having journeyed out of the land of Bersabee and toiled till he was weary, he put a stone under his head and sank to rest. And in his sleep he saw a ladder standing on the earth and reaching up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending and God leaning over the ladder and saying to him, 'Jacob, this land I will give thee for an inheritance and I will make thy seed like the dust of the earth and multiply it like the stars of heaven spreading thee abroad to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. *Cum vigilasset Jacob.* When he awoke Jacob cried, 'Surely the Lord is in this place and it is holy, it is wonderful, it is the gate of heaven.' This story I interpret in a spiritual sense.

Body and soul are like twins, they being one man and born together, just as the other pair, Jacob and Esau, were born both at once, and they are opposed to one another. Esau is the trifler, one who occupies himself with frivolous and perishable things. Jacob is the fighter, the victor. Bersabee stands for the uncertainty of this present world. On account of these things Jacob fled his country and his brother. Similarly with the soul, she is from heaven and body from the earth, from father and mother namely, and they are opposed to one another. Body wars with soul and soul with body, and according to St Paul there is bound to be strife betwixt the soul and body. The soul desires eternal, the body temporal things. The soul then has to flee from sensual pleasures and all impermanent things because, as Basilius hath it, 'Perfection means caring nothing for things which are not God.' He gives four examples.

The first: not caring for mortal things; next, vain glory, caring no more for his own repute than for his neighbour's. The third refers to pleasures of the senses. By these three he is taught to reach the fourth: caring nothing for himself. Thus the soul finds rest, and sleeping on a stone sees the ladder standing with one end on the earth and the other reaching up to heaven; sees the heavens open and God leaning over the ladder with the angels going up and down.

The ladder is an excellent symbol for the soul who in her lower powers is resting on the earth—those powers namely which are linked to the five senses and give life to the body, wherein she is ignoble—and she reaches heaven in her higher powers, whereby she knows celestial things. Accordingly one master says the soul is a mean 'twixt God and creature, for, set at the beginning and at the end of the Most High, she is in contact with the lowest. The angels ascending and descending are watching over her for she is still (asleep). All the works God does below he has first wrought on high. 'All form and likeness,' Dionysius says, 'he first took and sealed into the lowest angels by which means they are brought and sealed in creatures; just as an artist, inspired by his art, will carve in wood or paint on canvas or the wall, so the angels imprint God's light and consolation on the soul and the soul sees the heavens open and God leaning down over the ladder.' Now I tell you for a fact, and it is a strange one known to few, that no creature is ever enjoyed by the soul nor does it give her any pleasure. (Believe) it or not it really is true. Many a man has never seen Rome and yet Rome exists, and in Paris there are wonderful things that few people have seen although they are there. God was leaning down over the ladder because any liking the soul has for creature (she) would not feel unless (God) were therein. When she is conscious of this then creatures all fall away, and are blotted out from the soul. When Jacob awoke out of sleep he exclaimed, 'Surely God is in this place and I knew it not.' When he woke up creatures vanished: he saw only God. It is the same with the soul. While she is

asleep the angels wait upon her and she needs no help from creatures. But when she awakes to the realization of God she drives away the angels, and unwilling any longer to bear creatures' ministrations she has recourse to God alone. He says we must get at the kernel by piercing the shell. Above all we have got to find God, So help you and me the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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